PUCCINI AS MODERNIST: SELECTED TWENTIETH-CENTURY STRUCTURES IN *GIANNI SCHICCHI* AND *TURANDOT*

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To my wife Suzanne and our children Cecilia and Theodore

and

In memory of our dear friend

Jennifer M. Miller

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PREFACE

The initial impetus for this study was the author's observation – as a conductor and vocal coach of the opera – that in *Gianni Schicchi* Puccini seems to calculatedly distort our innate and preconditioned sense of rhythm and meter, manipulating the audience's (and performers') perception and expectation of musical fundamentals to formulate a fast-moving comic narrative in which things are only "right" when they are "wrong," and the grotesqueries of the plot seem to have musical analogues. This spurred an investigation into Puccini's last two operas that suggested the composer was engaged in the modernist project to an extent that has almost never been acknowledged.

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Puccini among the opera-going public is perhaps the epitome of "Italian" opera: popular, populist; a melodist whose lyricism, sumptuous mastery of the late-Romantic orchestra, heart-wrenching tragic heroines, and strong dramatic situations have given his mature works a permanent place in the international repertory. And he might seem the very definition of the Italian opera "tradition" – although he is also considered to be the end of it, as the work of no other Italian opera composer has entered the mainstream repertory since Puccini's death in 1924.[1] But this belies the controversies that surrounded him in his lifetime and the largely negative reaction of musical scholars to his work, both during his lifetime and after his death. His continuous popularity has surely obscured the progressive aspects of his art.

The last descendant of a dynasty of church musicians from Lucca, Puccini came of age when Verdi was the undisputed master of Italian opera and Wagner's music dramas were meeting with success south of the Alps. When Puccini went to study in Milan he saw countless performances of French and German opera. He was fully abreast of the work of his contemporaries.[2] In his maturity he enjoyed the technological trappings of twentieth-century modernity: automobiles and their perils (he was injured in an accident), motorboats, and transatlantic travel. He came to see his operas performed

[1] See William Ashbrook and Harold Powers, *Puccini's Turandot: The End of the Great Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), chapter 1.

[2] See the letter quoted by Leonardo Pinzauti, "Giacomo Puccini's *Trittico* and the Twentieth Century," in William Weaver and Simonetta Puccini, ed., *The Puccini Companion* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 235: "When you come to Viareggio, I will show you the scores of Debussy, Strauss, Dukas, and the others; you will see how they are all dog-eared from constant re-reading, all analyzed and annotated by me."

around the world. He sought out performances of *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Le sacre du printemps* and was favorably received by their composers.[3] He was influenced by the music of Debussy, being acquainted with *Pélleas et Mélisande* and almost certainly *Prélude de l'après-midi d'un faune* and the *Nocturnes*.[4] Puccini is well known for a predilection for faraway locations and the possibilities they offered to create musical exoticism, something that was part of the late-nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Zeitgeist. It is easy to spot similarities between Puccini's and Debussy's harmonic languages, especially in Puccini's twentieth-century works, such as *La fanciulla del West*, *Il trittico*, and *Turandot*, where whole-tone scales and parallel sonorities based on extended tertian chords that dissolve a sense of tonal center are often more common than diatonicism. Indeed, Puccini embraced and exploited the musical language of Impressionism, even if he cared little for the Symbolist aesthetics of *Pélleas et Mélisande.* Stravinsky's influence on Puccini – who saw *Le sacre* in 1913 – is manifest in the innovative rhythmic features of *Gianni Schicchi*, in particular, and *Turandot* is awash in Stravinskyan ostinati and often dissonant in the extreme.[5] Leonardo Pinzauti has asserted thatpassages of *Il tabarro* could be inserted "as is" into Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*.[6] It is surely significant that the *Trittico* was performed in 1926 at the Kroll

[3] Michele Girardi, *Puccini: His International Art*, trans. Laura Basini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 442–3.

[4] Mosco Carner, "Debussy and Puccini." *Musical Times* 108, no.1492 (1967): 502. Girardi, *Puccini*, 442, cites Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 157, to show that Debussy was respectful of Puccini's music, in contrast with the views reported earlier by Carner in "Debussy and Puccini."

[5] More research needs to be done about Stravinsky's influence on Puccini. Stravinsky's admiration for Puccini has, to my knowledge, rarely been cited. On June 16, 1913, during the composition period of *Le sacre du printemps*, Stravinsky was visited by Puccini (in France, precise location unknown but probably Paris). In a letter to Pierre Suvchinsky dated January 19, 1963, Stravinsky referred to "the great Verdi" and "the brilliant Puccini." Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), 607.

[6] Pinzauti, "Giacomo Puccini's *Trittico*," 236.

Theater, the "experimental" third opera house in Berlin run by Otto Klemperer, where the repertory also included *Die glückliche Hand* (1913), *Erwartung* (1924), and *Oedipus Rex* (1927).[7]

In seeking to invent a new musical language for each new work Puccini exhibited one aspect of musical modernism. But few scholars have claimed Puccini as a modernist.[8] If anything, he is more often viewed at best as one of the "true conservatives,"[9] or at worst, as a second-rate purveyor of decadent and retrogressive lyricism.[10] A rare exception is James Hepokoski, who has noted that Puccini was one of a group of "early modernist" European composers born around 1860 who strove to create "an identifiable, personalized style, that, while unmistakably emanating the aura, traditions and high seriousness of 'art,' also produced readily marketable commodities marked with an appropriately challenging, up-to-the-minute spice, boldness, or 'philosophical tone.'"[11] Pinzauti observes that Puccini "resembled other composers, from

[7] Carl E. Schorske, "Operatic Modernism," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36, no.4 (Spring 2000): 678.

[8] Puccini does not even get a mention in such recent general music histories as Joseph Auner, *Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries: Western Music in Context* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013).

[9] Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe 19007–1916* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press), 260. Citing the modernists' "openness to innovative ideas and contemporaneity of outlook," he claims that such arguments "hardly appealed to the true conservatives of this period" – namely, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Puccini, Suk, and Rachmaninov – who "thought of themselves as sustaining enduring values" (259–60).

[10] Most notoriously by Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (1956), rev. ed. (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988). Kerman takes an incisively negative polemical stance towards Puccini, and the author chose not to temper his views in later editions, arguing that he would have weakened the critical tone that made his book so important in the first place. Kerman writes of the pointlessness of *Tosca* (15), infamously described as a "shabby little shocker" (205). According to Kerman, Puccini "did not find" the dramatic potential of *Turandot*, in which "[t]here is no organic reason for the bogus orientalism lacquered over every page of the score." (206)

[11] James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No.5* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 2–3. The other composers Hepokoski cites are Elgar (b. 1857), Mahler (1860), Wolf (1860), Debussy (1862), Strauss (1864), Sibelius (1865), Glazunov (1865), Nielsen (1865), and Busoni (1866).

Rossini to Verdi, who often posed as conservatives, though their works contradicted them." He continues: "*Il trittico* is a dramatic documentation of such a contradiction."[12]

Puccini and his librettist, Giovacchino Forzano, developed the brief description of Gianni Schicchi in Dante's *Inferno* for the third panel of their "triptych."[13] In their treatment, an avaricious, snobbish Florentine family named Donati conspires to reverse being disinherited by their only just deceased uncle, Buoso. They persuade the wily upstart Gianni Schicchi to impersonate Buoso on his "death bed" and re-dictate his last will and testament. Schicchi agrees, so long as his daughter Lauretta can marry her love, Rinuccio Donati, and goes on to bequeath Buoso's property mainly to himself. It is the opera that some consider Puccini's masterpiece, and even Puccini's most trenchant critics acclaim.[14] However, until recently even the most prominent Puccini scholars have avoided a detailed analysis of *Gianni Schicchi*.[15] This is perhaps because their approaches – traditional motivic, linear, or symphonic (organicist) methodologies – have been ill suited for the purpose.

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[12] Pinzauti, "Giacomo Puccini's *Trittico*," 234.

[13] In the *Inferno*, canto xxx, there are only three verses (43–45) devoted to what Gianni Schicchi did: *Per guadagnar la donna de la torma / Falsificare in sé Buoso Donati* / /*Testando e dando al testamento norma*. To gain the queen of the herd / take on the shape of Buoso Donati / drawing up a will and giving it due form. Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Robert & Jean Hollander (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 550–51.

[14] Most likely because of its modernist attributes: see Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, 258. Kerman exemplifies the discomfit that serious mid-twentieth century music critics can suffer from a good tune *and* confirms the adage it is the Puccini opera that Puccini-haters can like, when he notes that Puccini's "indiscriminate lyricism cannot spoil *Gianni Schicchi*." Kerman is doubtless referring to Lauretta's aria, "Oh, mio babbino caro," suggesting that he approves of the otherwise modernist language of the score, discounting the validity or dramatic purpose of such an episode of old-fashioned lyricism.

[15] Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 3rd ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992), 507–8: "There is little profit in discussing the musico-dramatic structure of *Gianni Schicchi* in detail. The scenes succeed each other with such rapidity and the changes of mood are so numerous and mercurial that any verbal analysis would be inadequate." However, recent studies are addressing the analytical deficit. See Andrew Davis, *Il trittico, Turandot and Puccini's Late Style* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010) on the "filmic" nature of *Gianni Schicchi* and stylistic plurality in *Turandot.* See also his "Structural Implications of Stylistic Plurality in Puccini's *Turandot*" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2003).

Turandot was Puccini's last opera, left incomplete at his death in Brussels (where he was undergoing experimental treatment for throat cancer) on November 29, 1924. Puccini is said to have chosen the subject, after the play *Turandotte* by the Venetian playwright Carlo Gozzi (1720–1806), which was derived from a Persian legend about an ice-cold princess whose heart is warmed by falling in love with a prince who solves three riddles that have eluded all previous suitors, whose fate was consequent execution. The final two scenes were completed for the first production by Franco Alfano. Arturo Toscanini conducted the premiere at La Scala, Milan, on April 25, 1926. A new completion was composed by Luciano Berio in 2002.

There is a wide range of musical styles in *Turandot*, including tonal lyricism, sometimes tinged with "Persian" or "Chinese" exoticism (including some actual Chinese melodies[16]), but with several other identifiably "modern" styles of extreme dissonance, atonality, and ostinato by which Puccini seems to affirm his modernist credentials. Rather than being a backward-looking traditionalist, Puccini in these operas seems to be looking ahead.

This document therefore questions the assumption that Puccini was a "conservative," by investigating some of the structural aspects of musical modernism in Puccini's last two operas. His embrace of a discordant, rhythmically-driven, "modernist" musical language is evident in *Gianni Schicchi*, the third panel of *Il trittico* (The Triptych) premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City in 1918, in which moments of traditional Italian lyricism (that is, tonal, metrically regular music that follows the stresses and syntax of the Italian language) are relatively rare. Distortion of

[16] The original Chinese melodies and their possible sources are listed in Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 521–22.

historical operatic conventions provides irony, comedy, and satire. The rhythmic and metrical distortions are often accompanied by music that is highly dissonant, polytonal, and at times even atonal. Far from being a hold-out to Romantic diatonicism, in *Gianni Schicchi* Puccini used that style sparingly.

The purpose is not to claim Puccini as a modernist in the manner of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Baudelaire or Beckett. However, according to Peter Gay, "modernists of all stripes shared two defining attributes." First, they were all lured by heresy. Second, they were committed to "principled self-scrutiny."[17] Was Puccini a "heretic"? He was a composer who had successfully worked in a tradition that was changing, one that *he* was actively changing.[18] Like all modernists, he used innovation to critique tradition, even his own, and was engaged latterly in projects that used "heretical" musical means to do so. That these means co-exist with some traditional ones in *Turandot* poses interesting questions about its relationship with later twentieth-century music.

Many of the modernist features I discuss, such as non-functional harmony or a particular approach to ostinato, exist in his other operas from *La fanciulla del West* through the first two "panels" in the triptych, *Il tabarro* and *Suor Angelica.* But the last two operas most clearly demonstrate Puccini's modernist trajectory, using techniques and styles that definitively belong to contemporaneous and later twentieth-century music. An initial consideration of his reception among scholars and by modernism more broadly will be followed by analyses of different aspects of *Gianni Schicchi* and *Turandot*. The

[17] Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy from Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 3–5. The question of how deeply Puccini was involved in any "exploration of the self" is beyond the scope of this document, but would necessarily entail an interdisciplinary and intertextual examination of his characters' psychological motivations and conflicts.

[18] According to Gay, the modernist composer "violates the traditional rules of harmony and counterpoint"; the modernist poet might pour "obscene content into traditional meters"; the modernist architect might "eliminate all decoration" from his designs; the modernist painter might "exhibit a rapid sketch as a finished picture," all of which constitute acts of insubordination. Ibid., 4.

scope is by definition limited, but it seeks to be a representative exploration, primarily of musical structure, that I hope will provide insight into Puccini's modernism and provoke further investigation of it. His late works will be examined not solely through the perspective of what came before them, but how they might exhibit the musical structures (and, by extension, aesthetics) of the musical future, using analytical approaches that address Puccini's music for what it is: twentieth-century music.

Although musical examples are provided, it is assumed that the reader will have access to the widely available piano–vocal and/or full scores to *Gianni Schicchi* and *Turandot* published by Ricordi, as the quantity of music discussed in detail would preclude inclusion of all relevant passages. Score references will be given by rehearsal number (in square brackets) for *Gianni Schicchi*, and act, rehearsal number (in square brackets), for *Turandot.*

CHAPTER 1: PUCCINI'S RECEPTION HISTORY AND THE PROBLEM OF MODERNISM

At the outset of this study, it is reasonable to pose the question: if Puccini's last operas anticipated later musical developments, why have his more forward-looking compositional practices not received more recognition? Part of the answer is bound up in the complicated and intriguing problems of Puccini's reception. While the topic is too large to treat comprehensively here, a summary account is essential.

There is a long lineage of often negative critical commentary that goes back at least as far as Fausto Torrefranca's seminal 1912 polemic *Giacomo Puccini e l'opera internationzale.*[19] Although Torrefranca's musical views have been widely cited in the literature, there seems to have been relatively scant coverage of the full import of how his monograph's political agenda informed its musical criticism.

Torrefranca attempted to undermine Puccini's unequalled status as Italy's leading and most famous composer by decrying the effeminacy and internationalism purportedly manifest in his music and lifestyle, and even impugned Puccini's fecundity (he only had one son), using the full arsenal of contemporary nationalist theories about the weaknesses of women, the threat of homosexuality, and the insidiousness of the Jew (notwithstanding Puccini's blatant heterosexuality and Catholic heritage). This cocktail of belligerent nationalism, racism, and prejudice represents the fascist views that led to Italy's involvement and defeat in World War II, and has had a lasting effect on the

[19] Fausto Torrefranca, *Giacomo Puccini e l'opera internazionale* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1912). See Alexandra Wilson, *The Puccini Problem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) for a comprehensive historical account of these issues.

composer's reputation, which has still to be fully investigated. It matters because, stripped of its most inflammatory language, Torrefranca's view permeated post-World War II scholarship and still reverberates today. The negative effect on Puccini's posthumous reputation of the contemptuous resentment felt by his younger contemporaries at home and abroad has also still to be fully assessed. John C. Waterhouse has written of Puccini's genuine interest in the music of the younger generation of Italians, noting the similarities of some passages in *Il trittico* and *Turandot* to works by Alfredo Casella, Gian Francesco Malipiero, and Ildebrando Pizzetti. But there was no reciprocation: Pizzetti had "thoughtful but condescending" views about Puccini, while Malipiero had "unprintable" ones.[20]

One of the most striking aspects nowadays of Mosco Carner's influential critical biography (the first edition was published in 1958) is its anomalous hermeneutic approach. Much of Carner's stance is informed by a pseudo-Freudian interpretation of Puccini's portrayal of women and its relation to a supposed "Mother" fixation, among other things. Puccini's vacillation about the subject matter and libretti for his operas and his frequent corrections and revisions of his operas are seen as a reflection of personal weakness – rather than, say, the pragmatic behavior of a man of the theatre. The flaws of Puccini's operas, in Carner's perception, are a reflection of the composer's own psychological flaws. Carner, a student of the founder of the modern discipline of musicology, Guido Adler, was a critical admirer and detractor of Puccini. He states his opinions as incontrovertible facts in what was an ostensibly positivistic era, and does not demur from fanciful psychological interpretations oscillating between forthright

[20] John C. Waterhouse, "Puccini's Debt to Casella," *Music and Musicians* 13, no. 6 (1965), 18.

admiration and damning criticism: Puccini "remains an unsurpassed master" but had "no profundity and no spirituality" and was "tarnished by neurotic features."[21]

Carner's attempts at Freudian interpretation seem the most controversial and dated aspects of his work, and aspersions concerning the supposed "femininity" and "neuroses" of Puccini, as we have seen, have a long pedigree. If one were to turn the Freudian tables on its author, the book can be seen to be replete with judgements that reveal the author's provenance, prejudice, and chauvinism. The superiority of masculinity over femininity is a given, and he is prudish about sexuality, implying that a stronger man than Puccini would have suppressed his urges. Meanwhile, "battle cries" and nationalistic political statements à la Verdi are to be admired, while Puccini's "femininity" of character – he was largely uninterested in politics – is decried. Compare "Verdi's uniqueness lies in the elemental masculinity of his whole art" with "Puccini's, on the other hand, was a splintered, neurotic personality, feminine in many ways and rooted in man's strongest biological urge – sexuality."[22]

Carner's judgement of the effect of the death of the twenty-six year old composer's mother seems harsh, even callous: "her death affected him deeply – more than so natural an event would normally affect a son."[23] His most far-fetched Freudian interpretation of Puccini concerns his supposed coming to terms, in his early sixties, with the Mother-figure, concurrent with his own (sexual) decline and therefore arrival at real, albeit less potent, maturity. This is supposedly manifest in his return to the "*Mother*-land"

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[21] Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 3rd ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992), 269; 1st ed., New York: Knopf, 1958).

[22] Carner, *Puccini*, 272.

[23] Ibid., 47.

in choosing "*Italian*-derived" subjects.[24] This is a spurious conclusion to draw from Puccini's work on *Suor Angelica, Gianni Schicchi* and *Turandot* (even if they were drawn from texts by Forzano, Dante, and Gozzi respectively). Aside from pseudo-psychology, it is hard not to conclude that Carner applies the methodologies and aesthetics of the German canon to a non-German medium. There is an explicit assumption of German superiority, itself neatly illustrated in a comment made in the context of theatrical aesthetics in Latin countries (summed up by Racine's *plaire* and *toucher*): "In parenthesis, the most perfect equilibrium between these two aims is to be found in Mozart whose basic conception of opera was Latin, yet with an added depth flowing from the German element in his supra-national genius."[25]

Turandot is mostly received favorably by Carner, notwithstanding his reservations, shared by others, that Liù's suicide is "wholly adventitious," as it has no effect on the drama, and he laments the "profoundly disappointing" love duet of the third act (the music for which had been extant for around two years before Puccini succumbed to his final illness).[26] Nonetheless, for Carner it was a "fusion" of the various elements of his style and the "consummation of his whole creative career."[27] Puccini's integration of the comedic elements (Ping, Pang and Pong) with the serious atmosphere contrasts favorably with Richard Strauss's separation of them in *Ariadne auf Naxos.*[28] In a memorable comment that would seem to contradict Ashbrook and Power's analysis of *Turandot* as a "number opera"[29] – that is, consisting of self-contained and separable

[24] Ibid., 308.
[25] Ibid, 273.
[26] Ibid, 541.
[27] Ibid., 522.
[28] Ibid., 533.
[29] Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 15–36.

sections in the eighteenth- or nineteenth-century model – Carner notes that *Turandot* has Puccini's "best" first act, which is a "symphony in four continuous movements."[30] (This recalls an account of Puccini's management of the "lyrico-symphonic dialectic" in the first act of *Manon Lescaut* by René Leibowitz that designates it as a symphonic structure.[31]) Girardi posits that Carner's "symphonic" and Ashbrook and Power's "number" theses are not, however, mutually incompatible.[32] Conflicting notions about Puccinian "unity" can be found in Carner's and Girardi's respective studies of the composer. The historic problem in Puccini criticism is that there was a tendency to assign value to anything that exhibits "symphonic" development. Even "believers" in Italian opera, such as Carner and Leibowitz, assign value to those aspects that apparently conform to Wagnerian "unity."

Carolyn Abbate has, however, more recently questioned the usage of the term "symphonic" in relation to *Wagner's* works. She notes that it is used "to convey an aesthetic judgment," implying the unified "musical logic" that one might find in canonic German instrumental works.[33] Scholars in the past have been inclined to find structures that conform, or not, to certain German aesthetic models (e.g., sonata-allegro procedures

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[30] Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 534.

[31] René Leibowitz, "L'arte di Giacomo Puccini," *L'approdo musicale* 2 no. 6 (1959), 3–27. According to Leibowitz, that Des Grieux's aria "Donna non vidi mai" in *Manon Lescaut* is derived from a melody in the preceding duet is "ulterior proof" that Puccini wanted a synthesis of the lyric and symphonic elements (13). Furthermore, according to Leibowitz's examination of harmonic structure in the intermezzo that precedes the third act of *Manon Lescaut,* Puccini goes further than Wagner in the way he circumvents a return to the tonic. ("Infine, le ultime battute che procedono la tonica presentano un estremo interesse, in quanto fanno intervenire funzioni armoniche che già oltrepassono il campo delle esperienze wagneriane, e che saranno destinate a svolgere una funzione di primo piano nella successive evoluzione di Puccini.") (15). Leibowitz accepts, however, equally that not all of Puccini's operas are "reducible to symphonic form." (14)

[32] Girardi, *Puccini: His International Art*, 456–60.

[33] Carolyn Abbate, "Opera and Symphony, A Wagnerian Myth," in Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, ed., *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 92–124. Abbate points out that "music can be generated by poetry, and thereby transgress limits set upon instrumental (symphonic) music, and pass beyond what is comprehensible in the symphonic world" (95).

or cyclic forms), with the inevitable result that works which are written outside that tradition, like Italian opera, are received less favorably. More recently, however, sometimes borrowing from other disciplines, scholars on the ever-present search for Hegelian (or Aristotelian) "unity" in musical works have considered methodologies which extend "structure" far beyond the pitches and harmonies of "absolute" music but are on the whole just as keen on finding "unity."[34]

Curiously, Puccini's defenders, such as Girardi, have invoked Puccini's "modernity," rather than modernism, in his defense. The use of dance-music rhythms, such as the foxtrot, waltz, and one-step in *La rondine*, and the ragtime and cakewalk in *Fanciulla*, are taken as signs of Puccini's modernity, and Girardi cites the use of such popular devices by Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky to bolster the case.[35] Girardi also argues that Puccini's self-parody and satirical pokes at Gabriele D'Annunzio and Richard Strauss (musical quotations from *Salome* in *La rondine*, for example) belie a "modern" sensibility. Certainly, Puccini's own awareness of himself in a historical continuum and

[34] For a historical account of the search for "unity" in musical works, see Ruth A. Solie, "The Living Work: Organicism and Musical Analysis," in *19th-Century Music* 4, no 2 (Autumn 1980): 147–56. According to Solie, the clearest relationship between idealism and organicism is explained by Hegel. The Hegelian definition of beauty in art requires unity, which "elevates it to a status transcendent of the physical" (150). Solie adumbrates: "a work of art should possess unity in the same way, and to the same extent, that a living organism does" (148). Almost all commentators discuss Puccini's success or failure in terms of "unity." The concept of organic wholeness, related to Darwinian-inspired ideas about biological development, can be assigned to musical works, or as Alexandra Wilson shows in *The Puccini Problem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), applied to an entire genre: for some of Puccini's contemporary critics Italian opera itself needed growth or development whilst remaining "Italian." The difficulty is that the commentators disagree on how they define the unity they claim to find, or not. Sometimes the unity is "organic," and they are at pains to show it. The metaphor of organism is exemplified by how "cells" (usually melodic or harmonic fragments) are used, mutated (or not), and developed. Another unity is "poetic," often invoked by Girardi, which is inevitably more open to allegations of subjectivity by traditionalists. Reading the polemic exchanges about Puccini between Allan W. Atlas ("Crossed Stars and Crossed Tonal Areas in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*," *19th-Century Music* 14, no. 2 (1990), 186–96) and Roger Parker ("A Key for *Chi*? Tonal Areas in Puccini," *19th-Century Music* 15, no. 3 (1992): 229–34) and comparing Mosco Carner with Michele Girardi and Joseph Kerman with René Leibowitz, it is hard to conclude that there can be any truly objective analysis. One thing, however, that all these differing commentators seem to be unanimous about is that unity matters.

[35] Girardi, *Puccini: His International Art*, 341.

his place in contemporary culture does seem to demonstrate his "modernity," but it goes without saying that if you live in modern times, you are experiencing modernity. Puccini was world famous, writing for an international audience, and his operas from *La fanciulla del West* to *Il trittico* were being premiered in foreign, not Italian, theatres. He was up-to-date with international musical developments. His singers were not only singing Italian opera but crossing the Alps as well as the Atlantic to sing works by Strauss and his other international "rival" composers.

Girardi eschews psychology and aims to show in his musical analyses that Puccini not only has an identifiable style in general, but that he created complex musical semantics for each opera, each of which has an aurally distinctive and highly individual musical identity. Furthermore, he is at pains to demonstrate Puccini's oeuvre as reflecting the characteristics of fin-de-siècle art and the musical and aesthetic uncertainties of decadence and modernism, in contradistinction to those commentators who have failed to recognise or underplayed the composer's progressive aspects. Girardi's analyses in themselves reflect the reality that after decades of neglect Puccini has become a respectable subject for analysis, and the commentator is at pains to find "unity" in the operas, whether it is "organic" or "poetic." With that in mind, and if Italian opera is a counter-culture that has only recently been considered worthy of musical analysis, as William Rothstein and others have claimed, then a broader critical reassessment of Puccini has only recently started to emerge.[36]

[36] William Rothstein, "Common-tone Tonality in Italian Romantic Opera: An Introduction," *Music Theory Online* 14, no. 1 (March 2008); http://mto.societymusictheory.org/issues/mto.08.14.1/mto.08.14.1.rothstein.html#FN7REF (accessed January 20, 2011): "Italian opera was the Other against which German Romantic musical culture defined itself."

Roger Parker has observed that *Il trittico* is as much a response to the number of formidable one-act operas by the most "famous figures of musical modernism," such as Ravel, Schoenberg, and Strauss, as it was an outcome of the great success of such earlier *verismo* one-acts as Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* or Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*.[37] Although Puccini does not seem to have been active in politics, Italian nationalism lurks just below the surface of *Gianni Schicchi.* It is, after all, inspired by a snippet from Dante, the founding father of Italian literature, and in the opera the Renaissance glories of the Florentine republic are celebrated, notably in Rinuccio's aria. Composed during the final months of World War I, its celebration of an idealized, glorious Italian past might be a response to and a product of an increase in nationalism that was concurrent with the dismal losses experienced by Italy between 1915 and 1918. This comedy, unique in Puccini's output, is not moral: the principal attribute of almost all of the characters is greed. There is a dark, ironic, and tragic historic backdrop. As Parker reminds us, just as Schicchi was reminding the Donatis that the sentence for forgery is the amputation of a hand, followed by exile, thousands of maimed Italian troops were making their way home: *Il trittico* had its New York Metropolitan Opera première a mere four weeks after the Armistice.

The differing musical styles within *Turandot* are such that critics have been inclined to assemble taxonomies of style to make sense of it. William Ashbrook and Harold Powers reduce it to four "colors": *Chinoiserie*, "Dissonances and Half-Steps,"

[37] Roger Parker, "'The Purest Word of the Race': *Gianni Schicchi* as National Monument," in liner notes to the Opus Arte DVD of the 2004 Glyndebourne Festival Opera production (OA 0918). The one-act operas Parker cites are *L'heure espagnole* (1907–09), *Erwartung* (1909), *Die glückliche Hand* (1910–13), *Salome* (1905), *Elektra* (1909), and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1912).

"Middle-Eastern," and "Romantic-diatonic" (which they call the "Puccinian" norm).[38] More recently Andrew Davis has reduced it to three: Romantic, Dissonant, and Exotic (with sub- and super-categories).[39] Others have more complex style categories. Thus there have been numerous attempts to explain what Davis calls a "near-total integration of conventionality and unconventionality."[40] Carner may have been the first to suggest that the "exotic and impressionistic elements are so closely knit together that a clear separation is often impossible,"[41] to the extent that, according to Michael Saffle, "the impossibility of such a separation makes Puccini's language sound familiar even at its most 'exotic.'"[42] Allowing for the fact that all music starts to sound familiar when one becomes familiarized with it, Saffle's point seems to be that this music is somehow still recognizably by Puccini, even though it employs techniques and styles that are transnational and might have been used by Bartók or Stravinsky, among many others.

Puccini was certainly influenced by Stravinsky, and that influence seems to be fairly widespread in *Turandot*, just as it is in *Gianni Schicchi.* I would suggest, however, that the plurality of musical styles in *Turandot* is emblematic of a pan-Western twentieth-century musical modernism that is rarely acknowledged because it is not a wholesale, explicit rejection of the past, but a fragmentation and dissolution of common practices that allow for an exploration of how the past and present comingle. In a sense, the opera seems to point the way to the musical future that the composer did not live to see.

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[38] Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 89–114.

[39] Davis, *Il trittico*, 173–74

[40] Ibid. ,168.

[41] Mosco Carner, "The Exotic Element in Puccini," *Musical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 1936): 55.

[42] Michael Saffle, "'Exotic' Harmony in 'La fanciulla des West' and 'Turandot,'" in Jürgen Maehder, ed., *Esotismo e colore locale nell'opera di Puccini: atti del 1 Convegno internationale sull' opera di Giacomo Puccini, Torre del Lago, Festival pucciniano 1983* (Pisa: Giardini, 1985), 119.

Modernism and Puccini

The concept of modernism is central to any discussion of developments in music, art, literature, theatre, and architecture of the twentieth century. But the term itself poses difficulties, as there is not a consensus about its meaning. Nevertheless, there are sufficient aspects of modernism that are widely agreed on as being necessary elements of any working definition.

Broadly speaking, modernism in music is manifested in a rejection of the compositional practices of Romanticism and a self-conscious attempt to innovate radically, leading to a rejection of tonality and the hitherto standard rhythmic patterns and meters of Western music. In painting, literature, and architecture, too, the impulse to reject the aesthetics, styles, and materials of the nineteenth-century led to, as Christopher Butler has expressed it, a "withdrawal from consensual languages,"[43] with the aim of "subverting the institutions through which art itself is displayed."[44] Realism and naturalism in the visual arts were rejected in favor of abstraction and distortion.

Modernism engaged enthusiastically with scientific progress and new technology, while urbanization supplanted pastoralism as a subject for artistic expression. Modernism was both a confident embrace of the new, and a pessimistic loss of hope in the individual as autonomous subject, in part because the optimistic belief in continual progress made possible through science and technology was shattered by the cataclysm of World War I, giving rise to an increased sense of "alienation of the individual."[45] Artistic manifestations of exotic, usually Oriental, subjects were also a feature of early modernism, thereby continuing a late nineteenth-century trend. Primitivism – an interest

[43] Butler, *Early Modernism*, 4.
[44] Ibid., 16.
[45] *Grove Music Online, s.v. "Modernism," by Leon Botstein*; accessed 2 July 2015.

in non-Western, pre-civilized cultures – became an increasingly common theme in the arts, and the depictions of various non-European "primitive" cultures by Gaugin, Matisse, and Picasso are contrasting manifestations of exoticism or orientalism, a Western creation of Otherness that idealized or even fetishized "uncivilized" societies that were, ironically, made more broadly accessible only by the mechanization and technology brought about by the scientific progress of Western "civilization." In music, the apogee of primitivism is Stravinky's *Le sacre du printemps*; "Peripheral" European and Eastern Asiatic cultures also provided fodder for exoticism or primitivism, as exhibited in Bartók's *Allegro barbaro* for piano, *Le sacre* itself, or the "Persian" *tinta* in Puccini's *Turandot.*

The simplified, received wisdom is that the early twentieth-century progressive composer went in one of two directions: the atonal, eventually serial style of Schoenberg, or the harmonic and rhythmic language of Stravinsky, characterized by a suspension of the regular metric patterns of Western music and a new non-functional tonality which encompassed the use of tonal axes, bi-, tri, or poly-tonality, or the employment of new scales such us the whole tone and octatonic. But of course the picture is much more complex than that. With the dissolution of tonality, new ways were devised to lend coherence or give a sense of onward progression, or narrative structure, to music, and although the modernist project may well have been a rejection of the past, often the only way to reject something is to refer directly to it.

One way artists referred to the past was through a movement known as neo-classicism, which actually became the dominant international musical style of the first half of the twentieth century. It is sometimes considered a reaction against the vagueness of Impressionism and the apparently irrational extremes of Expressionism. In general

terms, it meant using a kind of tonal language that was not necessarily functional, but employed some kind of modality based on non-traditional or invented scales. It could refer to specific musical models of the past, or a style thereof, or employ structures of the past (such as fugue or a symphonic exposition), but with "wrong notes" to mark its modernity. Such allusions can be ironic or witty, because the old element has been distorted, or satirized.[46] We tend to think of Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and Hindemith as early neo-classicists. Puccini's compatriot Casella, Orff in Germany, Les Six in France, and Copland in the United States are identified as neo-classicists. The differences among those composers show that neo-classicism's usefulness as a term resides to some extent in its imprecision: there are various kinds of neo-classicism. I will argue that Puccini exhibits neo-classicist impulses of his own, notably in his allusion to historic opera buffa in *Gianni Schicchi* and a referential neo-classicism in *Turandot* that is a key part of its overall stylistic plurality. Neo-classicism can mean evoking eighteenth-century music, such as the Brandenburg Concertos, in Stravinsky's *Dumbarton Oaks* concerto, but a mid-twentieth-century composer writing a tone poem – a distinctly nineteenth-century Romantic genre – is composing with a similar look back to the past. Puccini's satirization of Wagnerian grandiosity at the end of *Gianni Schicchi* is another example of "looking back to the past" that has a modernist agenda: a witty rejection of previous operatic practice, popping the pompous bubble of Wagner and Wagnerites (of which Puccini, like Debussy, had arguably once been a member).

Puccini's modernism may be to some extent reflected in the character of Turandot herself, the protagonist, or for some contemporary critics even the antagonist, of the

[46] Some scholars differentiate this modernist principle from its postmodern successor: "postmodernist appropriation functions without any desire to assert the dominance of one element over another." *Grove Music Online, s.v. "Postmodernism," by Jann Pasler; accessed 2 July 2015.*

opera. For some contemporary critics, Turandot was a sociopath, a "machine woman" who heartlessly saw her hapless suitors, prepared to gamble their lives to win her favor, go to their graves.[47] As Alexandra Wilson has observed: "By the mid-1920s, puppets, robots, and masked figures had become emblems of the avant-garde, icons of a moment of cultural crisis."[48] The use of masks (cf. Ping, Pang, and Pong) and puppets in the theatre of the 1910s and 20s was in part a reaction against realism and the "synthesis of man and machine lay at the heart of the Futurist aesthetic."[49] Works such as George Antheil's *Ballet mécanique* (1923–24) were composed while *Turandot* was in its final stages of composition. The Italian musical Futurists, such as Luigi Russolo and Francesco Balilla Pratella, had been polemicizing (as Germanophiles) against Puccini and opera generally already for over a decade. Puccini, ever aware of the Zeitgeist, was stuck between the necessity to appeal to the public, the imperative to be "original," and a desire to be up-to-date. These not always compatible forces might account in part for the stylistic diversity of *Turandot.*

With hindsight, and as Arnold Whittall has pointed out, it is "difficult and even artificial to regard neo-classicism and postmodernism as separate except in historical sequence, with the former the preferred term from the period from World War I to the 1950s."[50] We can now look at Puccini's late works, and *Turandot* in particular, through the lens of what came after him, and might argue that he was wrestling with the challenges of being a postmodern artist. At the risk of committing a tautological anachronism, Puccini could even be said to be more postmodern than neo-classical.

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[47] Alexandra Wilson, "Modernism and the Machine Woman in Puccini's 'Turandot,'" *Music & Letters* 86, no. 3 (2005): 432–51.

[48] Ibid., 432.

[49] Ibid., 441.

[50] *Grove Music Online, s.v. "Neo-classicism," by Arnold Whittall; accessed 22 June 2015.*

Even though the term "postmodernism" predates Puccini by about half a century, the stylistic plurality and the musical structures of his late works exhibit aspects of the postmodern condition, in which "no orthodoxy can be adopted without self-consciousness and irony because all traditions seem to have their validity."[51] As we shall see, the "breakdown in boundaries between élite and popular culture" is an aspect of postmodernism exhibited in *Turandot*, a work that, in common with all major operas, required engagement with a significant public. Postmodernism can be seen as a reaction against modernism, but also a continuation of it. Although "collage" or "mosaic" approaches to musical composition that include musical borrowings (stylistic, actual, or self-borrowings) – and juxtapositions of contrasting or opposing styles – have long been practiced in music, they have become hallmarks of postmodern art. Self-referentiality is an element of postmodernism that seems to be particular in late Puccini: he juxtaposes his own, earlier style with those of others (and *his* other styles) to form an agglomeration of them.

The atonal revolution shattered the common language of Western music, and even neo-classicists could not escape the "emancipation of the dissonance." They too embraced increased dissonance and rejected functional tonality as they sought new ways to order pitches and to make their music sound "new," whether modeled on the old or not. It is also important to note that the "dismantling of the established syntax of Western music" in the first decade of the twentieth century was "remarkably widespread,"[52] not just the domain of a small number of leading avant-gardists. One important outcome of musical modernism is that there was, as Robert P. Morgan has put it, a "failure of any one

[51] Pasler, "Postmodernism."

[52] Robert P. Morgan, "Secret Languages: The Roots of Musical Modernism," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 3 (1984): 450.

language to assume a dominant position"[53] throughout the twentieth century, but it is intriguing that it is already true for one Puccini opera in 1924: no one language is dominant in *Turandot*, except perhaps that it all relates in one way or another back to Puccini's previously tonal practice. As Morgan continues, "the particular solution of each composer can be largely understood as a direct outgrowth of the stylistic evolution of his earlier music, and, thus, of a particular orientation towards tonality."[54] That is no less true for Puccini than for anyone else.

In the twentieth century, the sonic qualities of atonality could allow it to become a signifier in and of itself, especially if it were juxtaposed with more tonally-oriented music. Free atonality could start to sit alongside other methods of organizing pitch. Tonality itself was always defined by dissonance resolving ultimately to consonance. But in the twentieth century, the relative consonance of bitonal or polytonal music, based on triads, could be juxtaposed with free atonality or more extreme dissonance, allowing the former to act as a quasi-resolution. Juxtaposing atonality with neo-classical pitch collections, or even old-fashioned diatonicism – writing several "musics" within the same piece – became an option. Such procedures did become a feature of later twentieth-century composition, and a fact of life in the bewilderingly pluralistic possibilities offered in the postmodern age. Atonality or extreme dissonance as a signifier for weirdness, grotesquerie, otherworldliness, or alienation is used to some extent by Puccini in *Turandot,* and later in the century we see it virtually systematized in the film scores of, say, Bernard Hermann or, later, in how Stanley Kubrick used pre-existing twentieth-century music by Bartók, Ligeti, and Penderecki as non-diegetic music in the film *The*

[53] Ibid., 443.
[54] Ibid., 453.

Shining in contrast with tonal, popular music used diegetically. Atonality or extreme dissonance took on associations of weirdness, alienation, or brutality in *Turandot*, since they were juxtaposed with the syntactic features of the past.

Analytical Approaches

"Stylistic plurality" in late Puccini offers the scholar an analytical challenge. A singular theoretical approach simply does not work. One can do tonal analysis of chord structures, melody, and cadences, but what about the atonal or bi-tonal within or alongside those passages? What about rhythm, repetition, or even tempo? In this document I have always adopted the methodology that seemed apposite to the musical material at hand.

Recent theoretical research on temporality, rhythm, and meter that considers audience perception can help us rationalize some of the rhythmic aspects of Puccini's late works. As Darla Crispin has said: "Alongside issues of how time is conceived, structured and manipulated within a composition, there are parallel considerations of how it is perceived with the sonorous unfolding of a performance."[55] Indeed, my initial perceptions were intuitive reactions to preparing and conducting *Gianni Schicchi.* Crispin continues: "the focus upon musical time as it is *experienced*, rather than *conceived*, has been given added impetus in recent years with the emergence in music and the other arts of the phenomenon of practice-based research."[56] Given that in the case of *Gianni Schicchi* the manipulation of time, rhythm, and meter was clearly *conceived* in order to be *experienced*, such research might be very useful. Justin London has written about how much of the temporal complexity of modern and postmodern music is actually beyond

[55] Darla Crispin, ed., *Unfolding Time: Studies in Temporality in Twentieth-Century Music* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2009), 7.

[56] Ibid., 8.

the bounds of human cognition: "here is the problem for much modern, 'difficult, 'complex', or 'hyper-complex' music: many aspects of its structure and organization are not even remotely audible."[57] Fortunately this problem does not exist with Puccini! Examining *Gianni Schicchi* from the perspective of how it is perceived is useful precisely because his metrical and temporal manipulations are, like those of most of his contemporaries, within the bounds of sensory cognition: they are meant to be perceived. I suggest that in *Gianni Schicchi* Puccini sought to manipulate our sense of meter and temporality, and that one may now analyze this aspect systematically to gain a fuller understanding of the work's musical structure. Puccini composed at the piano, and I will draw from recent work in musical cognition that "recognizes the body as the active and creative site of musical meaning."[58] A useful corollary of this approach is that we may draw insights for preparing, practicing, and performing the work.

Given that many of Puccini's ostinatos (and post-tonal sonorities) have many similarities to those of Stravinsky, Gretchen Horlacher's work on changing repetition in the Russian modernist's music is useful in considering Puccini's ostinatos and his rhythmic organization, which have been little studied.[59] Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that as Stravinskyan as some of those passages are, there is no sense that they are actually by Stravinsky. Horlacher helps us rationalize the paradoxical perception we have of simultaneous stasis and formal development in Stravinsky's ostinatos, and as we will see, Puccini has his own methods of creating a sense of formal development through

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[57] Justin London, "Temporal Complexity in Modern and Post-Modern Music: A Critique from Cognitive Aesthetics," in *Unfolding Time*, 46.

[58] George Fisher and Judy Lochhead, "Analyzing from the Body," *Theory and Practice* 27 (2002): 38.

[59] Gretchen G. Horlacher, *Building Blocks: Repetition and Continuity in the Music of Stravinsky* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), and "The Rhythms of Reiteration: Formal Development in Stravinsky's Ostinati," *Music Theory Spectrum*, 14, no. 2 (1992): 171–87.

repetition. Pieter van den Toorn's work on accent-displacement in Stravinsky's music can also provide insight into Puccini's rhythmic structures in *Gianni Schicchi.*[60]

Perhaps some of the most radical claims about *Turandot* have been made by Ivanka Stoïanova:

> *Turandot* is among the first works in the tradition of opera that approaches one of the essential problems of postmodern thought and artistic creation: that of the construction of a world, musical and scenic, founded on the *différend*, which requires the creation of heterogeneous musical textures and "some genres of discourse incommensurable by their ends," but all the same submitting to a singular finality, that of the teleological narrative of the conventional genre of opera.[61]

Unlike writers who tend to rationalize musical structure in *Turandot* by an insistent referral to nineteenth-century models, Stoïanova suggests how its polystylism, hetereogeneity, and "fragmental" writing might actually point to the musical aesthetics and structures of the future Puccini never lived to see. Although the article is frequently cited, there have been few attempts to accept her invitation to consider *Turandot* through the prism of modernist or postmodernist theory, perhaps because cultural theory and aesthetics are harder to pin down than more traditional formalist analysis. According to Stoïanova, "it is precisely the fragmentary quality of the writing that seems to be one of the characteristic essentials defining the modernity of formal compositional thinking in

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[60] Pieter van den Toorn, *The Music of Igor Stravinsky* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1983), 214–38.

[61] Ivanka Stoïanova, "Remarques sur l'actualité de 'Turandot,'" in Maehder, *Esotismo e colore*, 204: "*Turandot* de Puccini est parmi les premières oeuvres de la tradition de l'opéra qui approche un des problèmes essentiels de la pensée et de la creation artistique postmoderne: celui de la constitution d'un monde, musical et scénique, fondé sur le *différend*, obéisant à des régimes de formation des textures musicales *hétérogènes* et à 'des genres de discours incommensurables par leurs fins,' mais toute de même soumis à une finalité unique, celle de la téléologie narrative du genre conventionnel de l'opéra." The *différend,* the state of being different, or disagreement, recalls J.-F. Lyotard, *Le différend* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1983). The translations of Stoïanova cited here are mine.

Turandot."[62] For many scholars, connecting the "temporal mosaics"—citations of easily recognizable styles or pieces, such as Puccini's harmonization of the American national anthem in *Madama Butterfly*, and collages by Berio, Stockhausen, and Kagel—to the music of Puccini might be a stretch, but it provides a provocative riposte to the rather tidy "end of an era" consensus of virtually all other writers on Puccini's last opera.

Stoïanova describes *Turandot* as a concatenation of "frames," or uni-formal "sonorous panels," each founded on one specific texture. "The succession of 'frames' evoking the technique of montage in film implies concatenation by opposition: that is to say, by very clean cuts between grand unities of musical and scenic discourse."[63] Andrew Davis has written of the "filmic" nature of *Gianni Schicci*, and the various analogies that film scholarship offers can certainly be useful. Nevertheless, it is the aesthetic and structural commonalities that *Turandot* shares with works not by Puccini's contemporaries, but by the avant-garde of the mid-twentieth century, that, according to Stoïanova, indicate it as a work of modernist and/or postmodernist art. Deliberately fragmental and heterogeneous works call into question the very criterion of "unity" that critics have historically applied to assess beauty or coherence in works of art. Perhaps one way to interpret Puccini's attempt at "total integration" is by the analogy of collage. Susanne Strasser-Vill alludes to Mahler's turn to virtually any literature as "anticipating the collage technique in music."[64] Catherine Losada's analysis of "collage" compositions is interesting, because although she is writing about the music of later, very different

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[62] Stoïanova, "Remarques," 203: "C'est précisement cette *fragmentarité* de l'écriture qui semble être une des caractéristiques essentielles définissant la modernité de la pensée formelle compositionelle dans *Turandot*."

[63] Stoïanova, "Remarques," 203: "La succession de 'cadres' évoquant la technique du montage en cinéma implique l'enchaînement par opposition, c'est-à-dire des coupures très nettes entre les grandes unités du discours musical et scenique."

[64] Susanne Strasser-Vill, "Exoticism in Stage Art," in Maehder, *Esotismo e colore*, 63.

composers, many of the issues she addresses seem applicable to Puccini in *Turandot*, even if, on the face of it, the music of the composers she is studying – Berio, George Rochberg, and Bernd Alois Zimmermann – seems a far cry from Puccini.[65] I will allude to some of these structural similarities and address some of Stoïavana's claims about *Turandot* in the course of this study.

Fragmental, reductive, and repetitive approaches to building larger musical structure are a feature of *Turandot.* According to Glenn Watkins, "minimalism may be defined most accurately as a technique, a general reduction of materials and emphasis on repetitive schemes and stasis."[66] I will examine the final chorus of Act I and other sections of *Turandot* to discern whether Puccini employs minimalism as an aesthetic, a style, or a technique – decades before the term was invented.[67]

I will also investigate how a neo-classical impulse runs through Puccini's modernism, although it has rarely been considered in detail, and examine how that manifests itself in contrasting ways in *Gianni Schicchi* and *Turandot.*

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[65] C. Catherine Losada, "Between Modernism and Postmodernism: Strands of Continuity in Collage Compositions by Rochberg, Berio, and Zimmermann," *Music Theory Spectrum*, 31, no. 1 (2009): 57–100.

[66] Glenn Watkins, *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer, 1988), 572.

[67] Timothy A. Johnson, "Minimalism: Aesthetic, Style, or Technique?" *Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 742–73.

CHAPTER 2: SELECTED MODERNIST TECHNIQUES IN *GIANNI SCHICCHI* AND *TURANDOT*

> "Comedy is by its very nature a more revolutionary affair than tragedy."[68]
>
> —James Feibleman

I would like to begin this exploration with some specific applications of musical modernism in *Gianni Schicchi* that have rarely been addressed by scholars. *Gianni Schicchi* on its own is a phenomenon that shows Puccini was far from the cultural conservative. Given its setting in Florence in the year 1399, the word "grotesque" might be an apt analogy for some of the modernist musical distortions in the opera. The Italian *grottesco* is derived from *grotto* and refers to the murals that were discovered on the walls of ancient Roman ruins in excavations during the Renaissance. It was then applied to representations of human and animal forms in painting and sculpture that were combined to create fantastical, absurd creatures. In common parlance it came to mean "figures or designs characterized by comic distortion or exaggeration."[69] Gianni Schicchi himself is ugly, "shaded by a big, huge nose that seems like a gigantic deformed tower."[70] Geoffrey Harpham has noted that "tragedy demands a moral universe, comedy a rational one; we believe in neither, and the grotesque, where one category erupts within another,

[68] James Feibleman, "The Meaning of Comedy," *Journal of Philosophy*, 35, no. 16 (1938): 428.
[69] *Oxford English Dictionary,* online version March 2011, accessed 23 April 2011.
[70] As described by Rinuccio just before his aria "Firenze è come un albero fiorito," rehearsal [28] + 22: "ombreggiato da quell suo gran nasone / che pare un torrachione." The suffix *-chione* is qualitative as well as augmentative.

satisfies our need for a more flexible ordering.[71] I would argue that Puccini sometimes subverts musical language to create varieties of musical grotesquerie.

The Disruption of Entrainment

> "The criticism which comedy makes of all actual things and events is aimed specifically at their formal structures."[72]
>
> —James Feibleman

Gianni Schicchi opens with a fast, frenetic orchestral outburst that feels forcibly slowed down to set the scene of the bedside vigil of the dying Buoso Donati. In this burst of orchestral laughter (accented descending chords) it is impossible to discern a time signature aurally. By the eighth measure of the opera we can make out a triple meter, and the laughter metamorphoses quickly into the descending-second appoggiatura figure of ostensible mourning that becomes a recurrent and germinal motive throughout the opera. Orchestral mimesis of laughter is transformed into weeping by changes of tempo and articulation. Laughter and crying are physiologically similar processes: they are marked in Puccini's score as they are in life.

There is also metrical displacement. It turns out that the strong beat is actually the upbeat, but one can know this only by examining the score: see the pick-up to the eighth measure of the opera. In syncopated triple time, we might expect the syncopation *after* the downbeat, not before it. The bass instruments are also in triple time, but an eighth note later. So we find ourselves metrically discombobulated (see Ex. 1).

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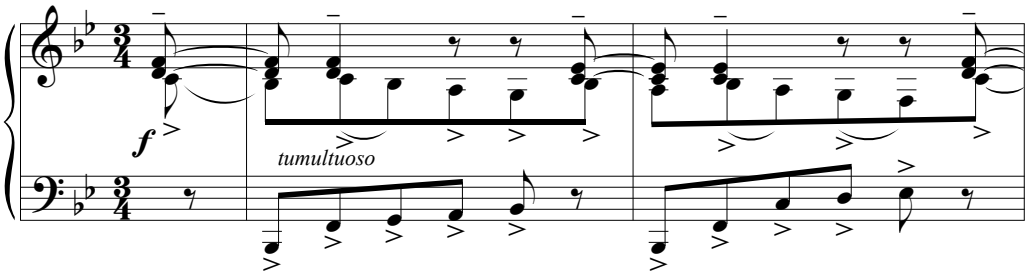
[71] Geoffrey Harpham, "The Grotesque: First Principles," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 34, no. 4 (1976): 465.

[72] Feibleman, "The Meaning of Comedy," 430.



Example 1. *Gianni Schicchi*, mm. 8–9. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

As it happens, in the opening bars of *Gianni Schicchi* the performers' sense of meter is incongruent with the listeners'. This is only because the printed score, by necessity, lays out a metrical organization from which the performers may learn and rehearse the music, and in this instance the listener cannot discern the organization. This incongruence stems, perhaps, from our inability to distinguish, as listeners, between what Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff call *phenomenal*, *structural*, and *metrical* accents. Examples of the first are "sudden changes in dynamics or timbre" (such as *sforzandi*), the second are "melodic/harmonic points of gravity," and the third is a beat that is "relatively strong in its metrical context."[73] In *Gianni Schicchi*, the metrical ambiguity can become a performing challenge. Singers have real trouble being fully certain of their vocal entries in this opening section. They perform from memory and cannot rely aurally on the usual metrical regularities and structural signposts by which they necessarily memorize music. They either require a "visual" memorization of the score, or need to rely on accurate cueing from the conductor or prompter to come in. This is the practical outcome of having our instincts to find metrical order deliberately circumvented. Our sense of entrainment has been ruptured.

[73] Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 17.

According to Justin London, meter is "a musically particular form of *entrainment* or *attunement*, a synchronization of some aspect of our biological activity with regularly occurring events in the environment."[74] There are times in *Gianni Schicchi* when Puccini's strategy seems to be to interrupt the listener's entrainment. A regular triple pattern such as that set up at rehearsal number [2], similar to Ex. 1, and repeated eleven times, is thrown off kilter by three duple measures after [3]. There is a sense of losing our balance, of disorientation, momentary confusion. The texture is interrupted five measures before [4] by the six first-inversion triadic chords on the off-beats (Ex.2). In context the chords can sound like on-beats, because the rests, being silences, are much weaker than chords. But they are actually off-beats. After these chords, three measures before [4], a regular quarter-note pulse is resumed. But the preceding chords make the off-beat sound like an on-beat.[75] Our entrainment is upset by half a beat.

The beat is clear but the meter is not. We could notate the three measures before [4] in duple time, and given the word-stress and harmonic rhythm, it would work just the same. But we will be thrown again by the resumption of the mourning motive three measures after [4], and later thrown off *again* by the funeral drum just before beat three, which we may perceive as a strong beat. Is it a phenomenal, structural, or metrical accent? Well, it is hard to tell, and that, it seems to me, is the point.

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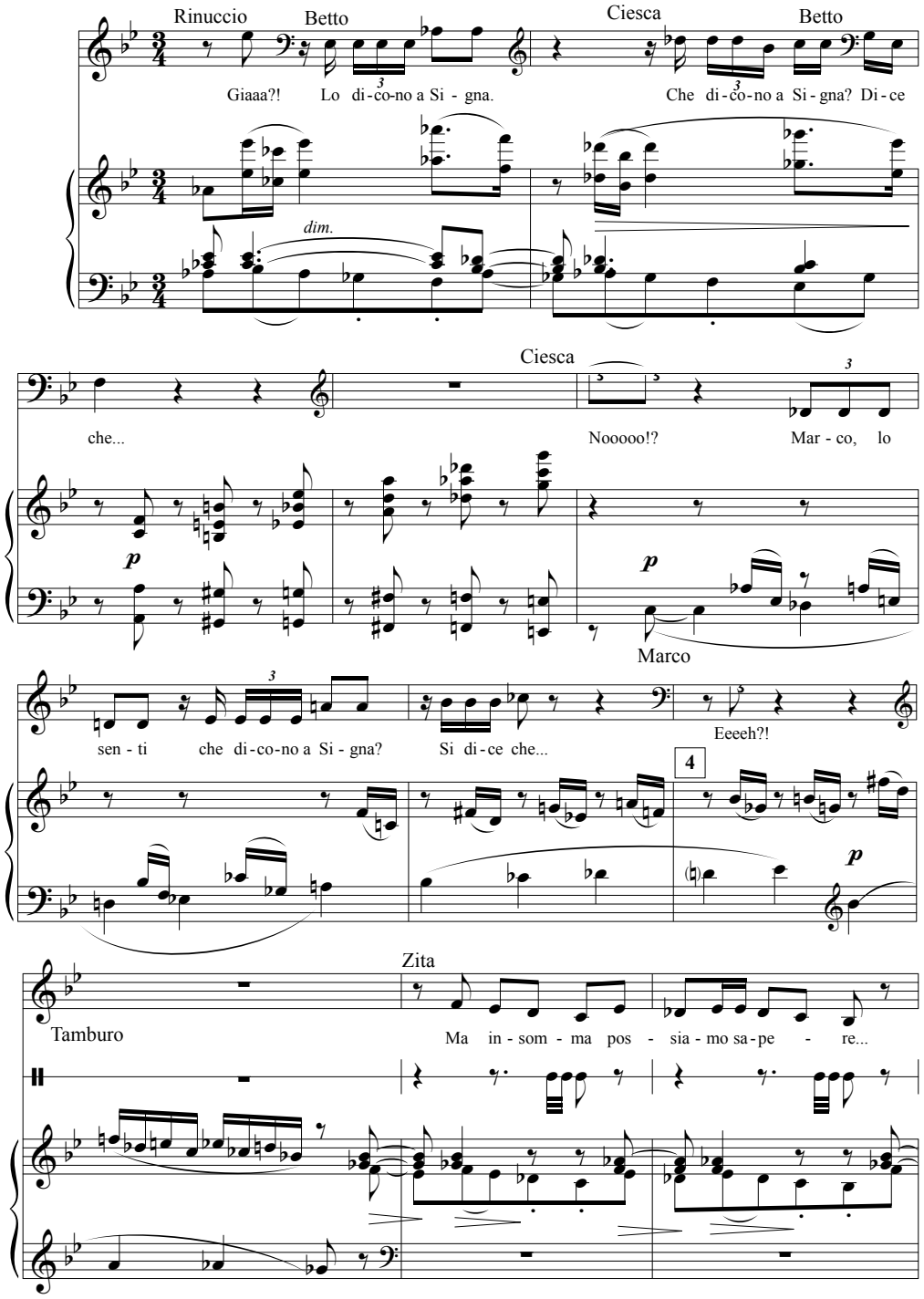
[74] Justin London, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4. London's studies draw from research on human psychology and cognition. Noting that the regular dripping of a tap also has a meter, he concludes that "meter is not fundamentally musical in its origin." However, he acknowledges that "[m]etric behaviors are also learned—they are rehearsed and practiced." (loc. cit.) London cites Jeffrey L. Pressing's hypothesis of *rhythmogenesis*, whereby "Musical rhythm arises from the evolved cognitive capacity to form and use predictive models of events." From "Black Atlantic Rhythm: Its Computational and Transcultural Foundations," *Music Perception*, 19, no. 3 (2002): 295.

[75] Pieter van den Toorn, *Music of Stravinsky*, 214–38, has written extensively on this rhythmic aspect of Stravinsky's works, calling it an "off-the-beat/on-the-beat contradiction."



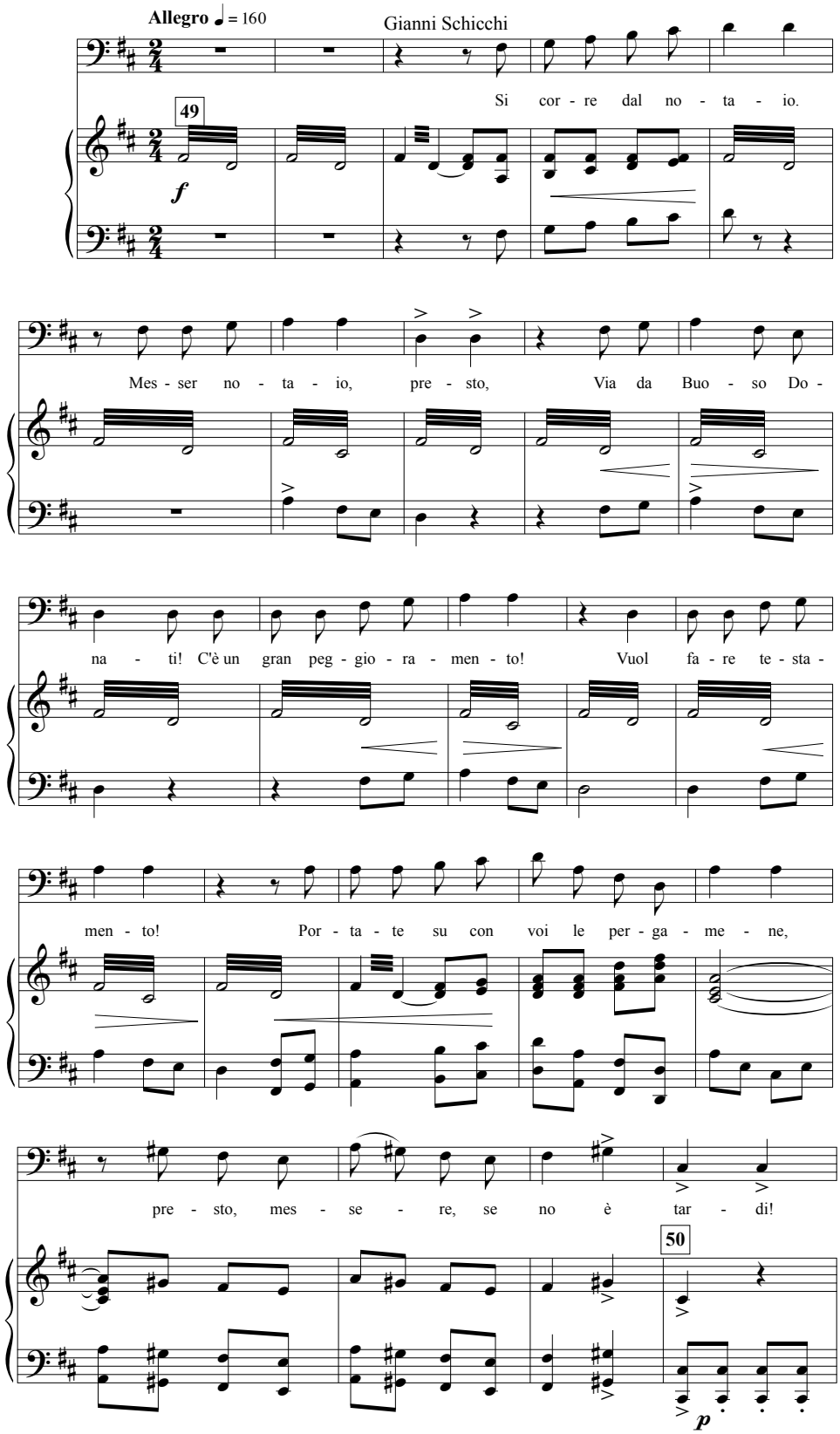
Example 2, *Gianni Schicchi*, [4]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

The quarter- plus whole-measure rest three measures before [6] consists of four seconds of silence. I would suggest that the entrainment continues within this precisely notated silence. Time moves forward and stands still at the same time. As far as

performance goes, many of us do not like a void. Or silence. But it is well for conductors and directors not to take liberties with the rest (for example, by adding a fermata for extra stage business, or cutting it short on a whim), as that would break the temporal structure of the piece. Since we detect ruptures of entrainment physiologically, the risk would be to willingly suspend disbelief precisely when Puccini, it seems, calculated on us retaining it. In the theatre we are not only being musically entrained: we are dramatically entrapped by our willing suspension of disbelief. If we lose one, we risk losing the other.

Rhythm and Meter

Another modernist approach to rhythm is manifest in hypermetrical schemes that also play an important role in negating a traditional sense of phrasal and rhythmic symmetry and balance. An example of this can be found at [49], when Gianni Schicci instructs the family members to send for the lawyer (Ex. 3). In this extract, at least three criteria suggest a sense of downbeat: the accents (which may be "phenomenal" or "structural"), the register (the relative highness or lowness of pitch), and the syntactic stresses of the text. Notated downbeats (which may or may not be perceived as strong beats) are a further criterion. With that in mind, one might posit the following hypotheses:



Example 3, *Gianni Schichi,* [49]–[50].

a) That a 3/2 hypermeter begins at the beginning of the *allegro* of [49]. This is suggested by a pattern of repeated, accented As in the bass and vocal lines that may be interpreted as downbeats;

b) That a 3/2 hypermeter begins on beat one of [49]+5 (at "no-ta-io"). This is suggested by the bass and vocal lines rising in unison to D and subsequent repeated low accented D's that may be interpreted as downbeats;

c) That [49] also exhibits aspects of a 4/2 hypermeter, suggested by the anacrusic nature of "Si corre dal no-" ([49]+4), and actualized later by the four-measure phrase structure discernible from four measures before [50] through Schicchi's subsequent vocal entries.

There are also, of course, 2/2 hypermeters within the structure. Into this metrically ambiguous context the music that opens the opera abruptly makes another appearance as a literal rhythmic augmentation of the music at [1] (Ex.4). The *più calmo* indicates a sudden switch of narrative mode: having issued instructions that the lawyer be summoned, Schicchi goes on to foretell what will happen when the lawyer arrives. The familiar figure of "mourning" is recapitulated, bringing us back in time to the bedside vigil. Once again, phenomenal accents on the reiterated appoggiatura create a strong–weak, on- and off-beat pattern.

Within this frame – and we have in a sense been "entrained" by so many earlier repetitions of this pattern – Gianni Schicchi's vocal entry on "Entra" feels premature by one quarter note, causing the understandable instinct for the singer to come in one beat late: entering at the correct moment is counterintuitive. It is perceived as a strong syllable on a weak beat, notwithstanding its notation as the first beat of the measure. Not only the

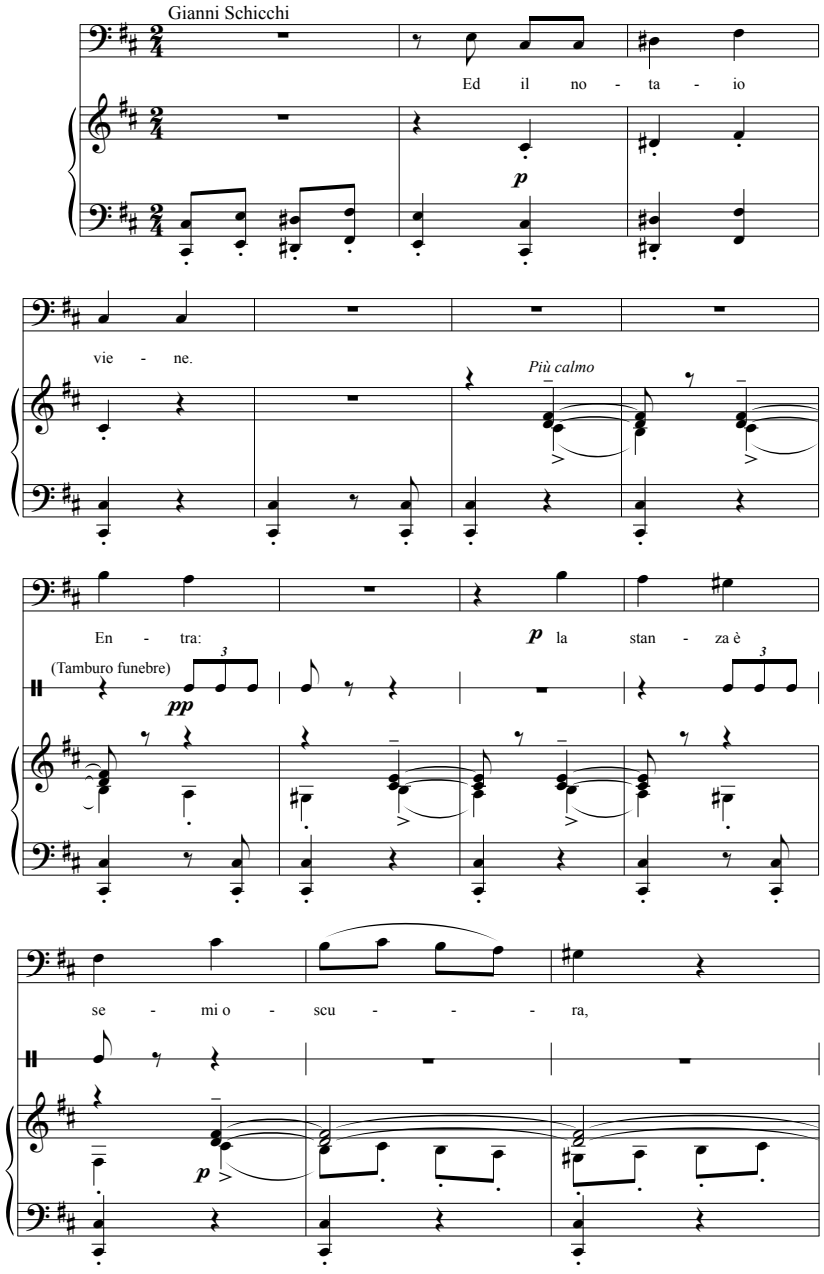
singer experiences this: as listeners our expectation is also subverted. Moreover, the funeral drum entry is coincident with a weak syllable, mid-word, although one might reasonably expect that orchestral "voice" to take place *without* an overlap with the vocal line, in order to isolate its perceptibility.[76]

If we examine the harmonic rhythm and accents, there are at least three 3/2 hypermeters. We may insert a 3/2 time signature at any one of the following places: the first beat of the measure marked *più calmo*, the second beat of the same measure, or the first beat of the next measure. Furthermore, and especially if we hear [50] in 4/2 time, the eighth-note melisma on "oscura" is an abruption of our expectation that the mourning motif will be repeated intact. Thus there is, so to speak, a polyphony of plausible, perceptible, and co-existent meters. That there is no apparent competition between the 3/2 meters confounds our innate proclivity to spontaneously rhythmicize, or metricize, repeated patterns. We hear strong and weak simultaneously.

Finally, when the 3/2 meter is consolidated and perceptibly regular at [50]+22, Puccini's text-setting departs radically from the norms of Italian prosody and text-setting. The stepwise vocal line ("Entra: la stanza è semi oscura") becomes angular, with unimportant syllables on high pitches and vice versa ("intravede di Buoso la figura"). It is

[76] I am using the term "voices" in a similar way to Carolyn Abbate in *Unsung Voices: Music and Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991). Since then they have entered the lexicon of opera analysis. Puccini's strategy of keeping the audience engaged by contrasting shifts in narrative voices is a relatively little studied structural aspect of his works. In Abbate's terminology "phenomenal" means perceptible as "music within the play," akin to so-called diegetic music in film scores, in contrast with "noumenal" which is the "normal" operatic music, understood as "speech" by the singing characters, or in the case of the orchestra, the usual orchestral "accompaniment," akin to the mimetic, "unheard" music of the film score. (The drum functions here as a topical musical reference, not as a phenomenal voice, as there is no funeral taking place.)

so deliberately and simply "wrong" that it neatly encapsulates a modernist oeuvre, a latter-day musical grotesquerie.



Example 4. ***Gianni Schicchi*** **[50].** © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

Besides the various implications of the concurrent hypermeters, the tempo indications and metrical ambiguities of [49] and [50] have specific narrative properties that provide some dramatic verisimilitude:

1) Puccini speeds up time in the *allegro* to hasten the plot; the ambiguous meter(s) help mimetically to represent the breathlessness caused by a hypothetical sprint to the lawyer's office. Schicchi orders the Donatis to run to the lawyer and instructs them, in the "voice" of (the actually dead) Buoso, about what they will or should say to him upon their return and the lawyer's arrival.

2) The sudden *più calmo* gives time for Schicchi to set the scene for, and allows him to "act out," the plan he will later execute.

3) In a new tempo, he narrates and suspensefully instructs, in the third person, what will happen upon the lawyer's arrival in Buoso's bedchamber.

These fast-shifting changes in narrative voice are paralleled by fast-shifting temporal "voices":

1) he gives instructions in the present to make the future happen,

2) he "recounts" what will happen in the future, and

3) he refers back to the past (the recapitulation of the opening music) as he plots to bring Buoso "back from the dead" in order to re-write his Will.

I would suggest that this extraordinarily swift shifting of "voices" is a longstanding, practical, and pragmatic aspect of Puccini's art: he sought to keep the audience engaged at all times.

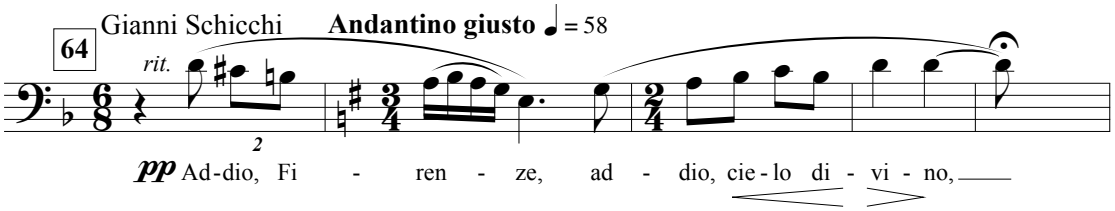
In *Gianni Schicchi* Puccini writes with a level of rhythmic and metrical complexity that is certainly sophisticated, but indubitably within the bounds of aural

perception – it would have been inconceivable for him to write music the complexity of which could not be heard by the audience. Rather than some kind of conceit, its modernist musical attributes are rational and honest from a dramatic perspective, and that makes it a rarity in twentieth-century opera.

Distortions

An initial harmonic straightforwardness which often goes "wrong" is one of Puccini's modernist strategies that can also be a feature of neo-classicism. For example, he establishes a melody at one point in the opera and clothes it in diatonic, pentatonic, or modal garb, only later to transform it upon its recall with an atonal orchestral ostinato. The "wrong-note harmony" we often associate with composers such as Shostakovich and Prokofiev can be used ironically, comically, or grotesquely.

The best example of this phenomenon comes after Schicchi warns the Donatis about the legal penalty for being caught fraudulently re-writing Buoso's Will: the sentence would be amputation of a hand and exile.



Example 5, *Gianni Schicchi*, [64]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

He sings a simple song of farewell to Florence [64] ("Addio Firenze, addio cielo divino / io ti saluto con questo moncherino / e vo randagio come un Ghibellino" –

Farewell Florence, farewell divine sky, I salute you with this stump, and I go off wandering like a Ghibelline), (Ex.5).[77]

The melody is functionally tonal yet tonally ambiguous, a mixed mode both pentatonic and Lydian in character: the C sharp (in G major) lends it a modal flavor. The sixteenth-note figuration is reminiscent of a vocal ornament in folk music. The suggestion might be of a Tuscan folk song. It is marked *pp* and therefore requires a heady, floated tone from the baritone. Waving goodbye to Florence, in an apparently nostalgic reverie, and thrusting his arm in the air with a feigned amputated stump, is grotesque – and comic. It reinforces Schicchi's confidence and the power he now wields over the Donatis. Time and the plot seem to stand still as they are nervously compelled to echo his song-like reverie in unison.

The song of farewell to Florence is later employed as a motive of reminiscence. Initially, only fragments of it are used to goad the Donatis in the course of Schicchi's re-writing of Buoso's Will in the presence of the notary and the witnesses. At [76]+11, when Schicchi interrupts a furious outburst by the family, a simple fragment of it is used as a parenthetical warning to silence the Donatis. They have to suppress their rage in the circumstances: musically speaking, the ensemble peters outs. Schicchi goes on to bequeath Buoso's prized assets – the mills at Signa – to himself. The melody reappears, at the climax of the re-writing of the Will with a harmonic garb and pulsing ostinato of

[77] The reference in the libretto is to the thirteenth-century political struggles between the Guelphs, loyal to the Papacy, and the Ghibellines, loyal to the Holy Roman Emperor. The Guelphs eventually defeated the Ghibellines. In Florence, the Guelphs were bitterly divided into two camps: "Black" and "White." Dante, from whom the story originates, was loyal to the Whites, and was exiled after the Blacks took control of Florence in 1302. Elizabeth Elmi writes: "the Ghibellines would depict their exile as a wandering journey (they tended to use the verb *vagare*). It is a literary reference, which is meant to be ironic. Dante and Petrarch both used the trope extensively in their works and in their self-imaging. Since the opera is based in Florence in that time, it makes sense to poke fun at their banishment in this way." (Personal communication to the author).

brutal modernism reminiscent of Stravinsky's "primitive" style. This version is a synthesis of the nineteenth-century technique of thematic recall with hard-edged twentieth-century modernism.[78]

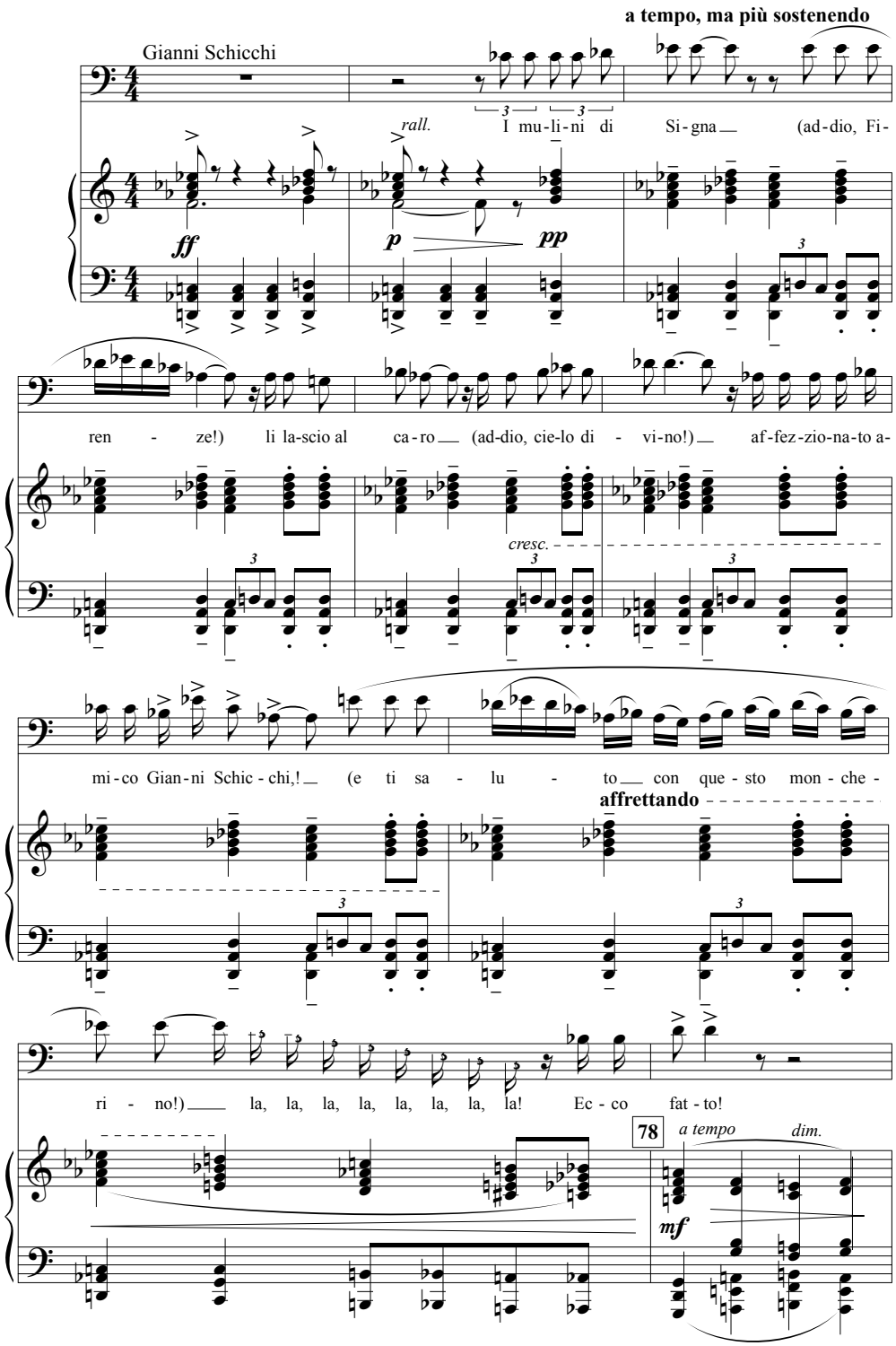
This passage ([77]+ 9 to [78]) is quite remarkable for several reasons (Ex.6). First, the "phenomenal" accent on the fourth beat gives us confused signals about the location of the downbeat.[79] Second, the treble register consists of planed half-diminished chords. Third, the bass register is a pedal tone, or drone, built on a tritone. Fourth, and this is the most "wrong" aspect of all, the alternating C natural–D natural in the orchestra's tenor register (first clarinet, harp, and viola) intensifies the dissonance further. These insistent chords rob the melodic fragments of any clear tonal or modal orientation. Furthermore, the *affrettando* indication is antithetical to our expectations of the downward trajectory of the chords in the measure before [78] – a *rallentando* would be more conventional. This is reinforced by a crescendo downwards. Our musical expectations are thus doubly thwarted.

In its entirety, the scene with the notary, beginning at [67] and ending at [80], has a tonal bedrock of C major. The first outburst of the relatives ([67]–[77]) can be seen diatonically, albeit with a planing of chords that is momentarily tonally de-centering, as the Donatis react to Schicchi's initial deceit. The passage from [77] to [80] is, in C major, a straightforward ii–V–I progression. A return to normality is then feigned (at [78]) when

[78] The use of thematic recall is of course common to all Puccini's operas and was a feature of nineteenth-century French opera. Steven Huebner compares the practice of thematic recall in Massenet's *Werther* with Puccini's in *Manon Lescaut* in "Thematic Recall in Late Nineteenth-Century Opera," in *Studi pucciniani* 3 (Lucca: Centro Studi Giacomo Puccini, 2004): 77–104.

[79] Pieter van den Toorn, *Music of Igor Stravinsky*, 215, describes Stravinsky's use of such devices as a "forging of a contradiction or reversal in the upbeat/downbeat identity of reiterating fragments."

Puccini reverts to extended tertian sonorities comprised of the C diatonic pitch collection, as Schicchi instructs Zita to pay the notary and witnesses from her own purse.



Example 6, *Gianni Schicchi*, [77]–[78]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

This return to diatonicism is parallel with Schicchi's need to bring back a semblance of solemn "normality." All that musical "wrongness" is seemingly "righted." That Schicchi's instruction to Zita adds insult to injury is also comic in its insincerity. It turns what is, at face value, the decent and normal thing to do into a crowning slap in the face for Zita. The hapless notary and witnesses are oblivious and moved by "Buoso's" generosity. Of course, the generosity is actually greed. Metrical ambiguity and harmonic dissonance give way to a sort of cognitive dissonance achieved, ironically, by musical consonance.

Further harmonic distortions of convention can be seen when suggestions of nineteenth-century tonal progressions are somehow unsettled by layers of tonally unrelated material. There is a ubiquitous avoidance of a true dominant-seventh chord in both *Gianni Schicchi* and *Turandot*, even when that is the clearly intended harmonic function of the (implied dominant) chord.

A relatively simple example is at [54] (see incipit of [54] at Ex. 25, page 79) when the most basic functional tonal progression I– IV–V–I is suggested by the bass and high soprano registers of the orchestra over a regular sixteen-measure period. The rules of voice-leading are broken, as each progression is a parallel fifth. At the same time, the orchestra's inner voices play extended minor sevenths that are unequivocally non-tonal. We hear this sound as something "not quite right." We cannot easily discern either major or minor, even though the background is strongly suggestive of functional tonal progressions.

Another basic example of grotesque dissonant harmony resides in the pseudo-medievalism of the gaily executed "Requiescat in pace" after the funeral bell tolls (after

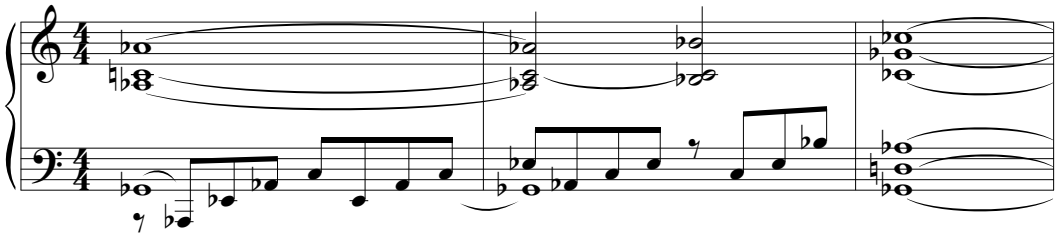
[58]) for someone *other* than Buoso Donati, to the great relief of the Donatis. This is organum "gone wrong." The parallel 6/3 chords that make up the organum with built-in tritones are a modernist harmonic usage that could belong to any number of later twentieth-century choral pieces.

Other distortions in *Gianni Schicchi* are of a more topical variety, such as that of the lullaby and the operatic trio, grotesquely deployed when Zita, Ciesca, and Nella put Gianni to bed as he prepares to impersonate the deceased Buoso ([61]– [63]). They gather round the bed singing sweet nothings to him to a gently rocking rhythm. The language is as perverted as the lullaby: "È bello" (after all, he is not at all handsome); he is far from a "bambolino" (little doll); "diamo un confortino" ("let's give him a little comfort") is suggestive of sexual reward, hinting not only at what they might offer him if the inheritance goes their way, but that they will do literally anything to get the money.

The convention of the traditional *opera buffa* finale is also corrupted. The unison chorus and initial C-major chord at [80] signals the beginning of the finale. But it goes immediately "wrong" via non-key chromatic chords and a recall of earlier non-tonal (polytonal) progressions and insistent rhythms as the Donatis ransack Buoso's house. More infantile vocal lines give way to pure shouting. Not only that, it is not a particularly *lieto fine.* The conflation of *buffa* (the genre, this particular opera) and *brutta* (this particular opera, the Donatis, Schicchi himself, the greed of the horrible Donatis, etc.) is ironic. To cap it all, after the final duet, the "fourth wall" is broken, and Schicchi addresses the audience directly, invoking the great Dante himself. It's an immorally uncomfortable happy ending: the Donatis received their just deserts, a young couple is united, the protagonist is rich, and we enjoyed every minute of it.

Apotheosis Now

After the rampant ransacking of Buoso Donati's former home, and the banishment of the avaricious Donatis from it, Gianni Schicchi takes up residence there. A musical transformation quite remarkable and unmistakable to any experienced operagoer takes place that is only magnified by the acerbically polytonal, kinetic, and infantile tantrum of the music that precedes it. There is a quick but seamless change in mood, color, and light. A sudden expansion of texture happens, and we go from darkness to light as the orchestra's rumbling chromatic sonorities give way to an allusion of *the* musical emblem of transcendence: not just the half-diminished *Tristan* chord, but a virtual quotation that we understand as the "love-death" (Ex.7).



Example 7, *Gianni Schicchi,* [83]+2. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

That this takes place for Lauretta and Rinuccio's duet ([83]–[85]) is a brilliant way to close the opera. There is no doubting the sheer sensual beauty of the music and the grandiosity of the hyper-Romantic musical gesture. It totally exceeds the simplicity, youth, and happy levity of these two attractive, naïve, but shallow characters, who diminish themselves and their love immediately by singing as much about the stunning view of Florence as they do about each other. It's a musical joke, musical satire *par excellence*. Parody, as defined by Frederic Jameson, "capitalizes on the uniqueness" of styles and "seizes on their idiosyncrasies and eccentricities to produce an imitation which

mocks the original."[80] This is not just bursting Wagner's bubble—it is a self-referential joke about operatic indulgence in general, a form of musical hyperbole the grandiosity, sheer sensual beauty, and expansiveness of which seem out of place, as it envelops us all in its warm sentimentality. With the transformation of the "Addio speranza bella" motive ([42]+4) into the ecstatic apotheosis of this duet, Puccini seems almost to be poking fun at himself and the whole nineteenth-century operatic enterprise, especially the Wagnerian procedures (that he had so successfully synthesized into his earlier work, notably in *Manon Lescaut*), for its sheer prolixity of expression. *Gianni Schicchi*, Puccini's most taut and concise score, is less than one hour long.[81]

The Right Tempo is the Wrong Tempo

Puccini composed at the piano, and all of his scores, although they often require great dexterity to execute, essentially lie comfortably under the hand. Rehearsal pianists preparing for their first production of *Gianni Schicchi* will soon learn that it is physically counterintuitive to play the *largo* at [1] (same music as Ex. 1) where the curtain rises, at a quarter-note equals sixty. It is easier to play it slightly faster. Indeed, only persistent practice with Puccini's metronome mark will make for a metrically steady rendition. Inexperienced orchestras will also surely rush, unless there is an insistence on Puccini's tempo by the conductor.

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[80] Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *Postmodernism and its Discontents: Theories, Practices*, ed. Ann Kaplan (London: Verso, 2003), 16. Cited by Losada, "Between Modernism and Postmodernism," 60.

[81] Italian operagoers of the time (and no doubt the American operagoers who saw the première at the Metropolitan Opera in New York on 14 December 1918) understood the reference. Alan Malloch, *The Autumn of Italian Opera: From Verismo to Modernism, 1890–1915* (Boston, MA & Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 2007), 338.

I suggest that this was also true for Puccini as he composed the score, and that his tempo indications are as prescriptive and structural as any other notation in the score. I also suggest that there is a relationship between this counterintuitive tempo and Puccini's dramatic intentions, and that they are related to our perceptions of time. Puccini's organization of "experiential time" is an outcome of a modernist sensibility that aims to distort our sense of rhythm and meter and is a product of his compositional process at the piano. Like Stravinsky, Puccini specified metronome marks as a result of empirical observation and experimentation at the keyboard. The physical act of playing therefore correlates with the music that was the outcome. The two cannot be separated. And corollaries exist for performers as well as analysts. Entrainment is related to the theory of *embodiment.* George Fisher and Judith Lochhead assert that the "recurrent patterns of bodily experience—those of the active body and the body in relation to the world—give rise to preconceptual structures that provide the basis for imaginative forms of understanding."[82] Furthermore, "[i]n the particular situation of composers within the Western concert tradition, their prior embodied experiences with the physical movements involved in producing sound will provide the genesis for imaginative production."[83] This assertion provides a conceptual basis for understanding what gave rise to Puccini's (and to other composers', not least Stravinsky's) compositional choices, suggests why these choices should be respected in performance (because they are structural, even syntactical, rather than merely interpretive), and helps to explain why certain musical phenomena in the score feel "wrong." A manipulation of intuition seems to be a grotesquerie in and of itself.

[82] George Fisher and Judith Lochhead, "Analyzing from the Body," *Theory and Practice* 27 (2002): 41

[83] Ibid., 47.

The onstage performers have to wrestle with Puccini's insistence on the tempo of the bedside vigil just as he did at the piano: few dramatic singers like to feel "boxed in" by a tempo that is slightly too slow for comfort and makes their sung, quasi-recitative lines take too much time than feels "natural" – and modern singers generally like to act as "naturalistically" as possible on stage, partially to mask the timeless problem of opera (that they are singing, not speaking), and partially because they instinctively, and understandably, sense enforced stasis or silence as a kind of vacuum they need to fill. Puccini's highly stylized writing, therefore, requires the utmost discipline of ensemble. Stage directors who are insensitive to the score's intrinsic narrative properties may even compound the matter by adding superfluous stage business. Likewise, conductors should observe these tempo indications and distrust their intuition. It is Puccini's manipulation of intuition that seems to make the piece work. Even at a basic level, one reason why Puccini's tempos should be observed is that by drawing out time at particular points, the dramatic tension increases.

Ostinato in *Turandot*

"Finally, a *Turandot* filtered through the modern mind"[84] —Giacomo Puccini

Early in Act I of *Turandot*, after the Mandarin makes a public proclamation to the gathered crowd that the Prince of Persia, having failed to solve the three riddles of Turandot, is to be executed, a chorus of executioners sings savagely of preparing the tools

[84] "In fine: una Turandot attraverso il cervello moderno, il tuo, d'Adami, e mio." Letter of March 18, 1920, to Renato Simoni, in Eugenio Gara, ed. *Carteggi pucciniani* (Milan: Ricordi, 1958), 490, as translated by Alexandra Wilson in "Modernism and the Machine Woman" in *Music and Letters* 86, no. 3 (2005), 443.

of their trade, of tirelessly sharpening their blades on the whetstone. In a familiar ritual, the bloodthirsty crowd seconds them, calling the suitor to come forth for execution. "Strike the gong," they all cry, "and we will see Turandot appear." "The enigmas are three; death is one."

The chorus employs a musical language that owes much to modernist developments in music from the second decade of the twentieth century, in structure and aesthetic. The language makes a brutalist break from Puccini's youthful practice, and shows the influence of a new generation of composers. The melodic fragments that refer to the instruments of death are angular and un-lyrical, and are derived from the intervallic properties of the "execution" motive that opens the opera. Repetition of the two main musical ideas comes with text that propels the narrative forward, while new layers of orchestration and detail add to increased din and excitement. The most savage outcries of the chorus are genuine atonal tone clusters ([15]+25), at which point Puccini voices the vocal parts with a craftsman-like concern to maintain balance and audibility of the crowd over the piercing orchestra.

The chorus ([9]–[17]) exhibits several melodic, harmonic, and coloristic touches that are modern and exotic: the old *diabolus in musica*, the tritone as melodic interval, provides dissonance (the Lydian raised fourth is prominent, for example, at [11]), and the gong is a prominent piece of *chinoiserie*. The brutal, almost mechanistic demands of the crowd to prepare the tools of torture for the unfortunate suitor are achieved in different ways: there are imperative outbursts, choral voices of extreme angularity, and unison stepwise chants extolling the gruesome fate: "Oh, sweet lovers, we are ready to embroider your skin" ("O dolci amanti / Noi siam pronti a ricamar le vostre pelle"). Some

of this writing is similar to the kind of choral writing we hear in Orff's *Carmina Burana* (1935–36); the brutalism is akin to Stravinsky's "primitive" style. The individuals of the chorus (crowd) are melded into a uniformly unthinking monolith whose adherence to the state (the Princess Turandot) is unquestioned, and whose bloodlust is apparently unquenchable. It is not just a demand for the execution of the unfortunate suitor. There is also a grotesque, exaggerated lust for the implements and procedure of torture.

The chorus is entirely ostinato-based, consisting of "blocks" that are repeated. Non-developmental and primitivist in style, the chorus is a "block" within the larger act structure—itself built from a series of concurrent and/or alternating smaller constituent blocks.

At the macro level, the chorus can be divided schematically into an introduction and five sections delineated by texture and tonal center; the introduction provides the transitional material between the sections.

Intro: [9]–[10]; B-flat pedal, open fifths; final three measures transition via planed open fifths outlining tritone (the execution motif) into:

A: F-sharp minor ostinato with Aeolian-quality vocal line doubled; flat sevenths add "folk" or "oriental" color; transition via planed open fifths outlining tritone into:

B: B-flat ostinato bass ([11]) with Lydian-quality vocal chant in which crowd calls on lovers to advance; executioners' dissonant responses derived from "fate" motive at beginning of opera; new ostinato in violin II/cello alternates with same in clarinet/bassoons; final three measures transition via planed open fifths outlining tritone into:

A2: as A, but with new layers of orchestral ostinato.

B2: similar to B but with new vocal layers of orchestral ostinato and figurations; transitions via planed open fifths outlining tritone into:

A3: similar to A but fragmenting into new repetitions ("dove regna Turandot"); transition ostinato ([15]) longer than heretofore; dissonant ejaculations on "Morte!" and "Ah, ah!"; fivefold repeat of "dove regna Turandot"; closes unprepared on F# minor.

Note that there is a fragmentation of A via repetition; the choral references to Turandot ("dove regna Turandot") are pentatonic, a persistent signifier of "Chinese-ness" throughout the opera.

At the local level, a number of discrete "blocks" are given ostinato treatment, sometimes concurrently, sometimes alternating, and are readily identifiable as follows:

1) Three transitional planed open-fifth chords outlining the minor second and tritone, and variants thereof (2 before [10] through [10]).
2) The melody we first hear on "Ungi, arrota, la lama guizzi, sprizzi" ([10]+1).
3) The concurrent ostinato in the bass consisting of alternations between F# and C#.
4) The aforementioned pentatonic figure on "dove regna Turandot."
5) The B-flat / F-natural bass ostinato at [11].
6) The violin II/cello ostinato with the sixteenth-note triplet, alternating with clarinets/bassoons, violas/cellos, bassoon/trombone at [11].
7) The angular exclamations on the pitches C–A-flat–D–E first heard at [11]+6 on "dolce amanti," then repeated.

8) The chant-like melody in the voices and orchestra at [11] (“ O dolce amanti, avanti, Avanti!”).

9) The dissonant repeated chord (D flat, E flat, G, A,) on “morte”/“ah, ah!” ([15]+ 10).

The entire chorus is composed of these “blocks.” It is based on repetition but, because some of the blocks are metrically asymmetrical, some of the repetitions are unpredictable; our in-built sense of regularized meter is interrupted. The interruption of a normative sense of onward musical progression is also achieved by sudden tempo change: *sostenuto* followed by *tornando a Tempo* at clearly demarcated points. Although this disturbance is easy for analysts to ignore, it is confirmed by analogous incidents in *Gianni Schicchi.* The placement of the tempo change (4 before [11]) is coincident with a change in beat subdivision (the orchestra in triplets after relentless eighth-note ostinati), followed by a return to duplet rhythm at [11], giving us a sense of the music being slowed down under its own weight, only to gain locomotion again.

The subsequent sudden tempo change takes place on the second beat of the measure ([11]+10) and is discombobulating in a different way, momentarily making the music seem to lose its balance. An easy way to experience this is to listen to the music without a score and try to conduct two beats to a measure, in time with the orchestra and chorus. It’s counterintuitive and an elementary lesson that you cannot learn to conduct music by listening to it. The music becomes both slower and faster at the same time; the beats become slower, some of the notes, faster. The rhythms of the faster inner ostinati create a sense of resistance and propulsion at the same time.

This imbalance, together with its other features, gives the music an irrational brutality—by design.

Turandot's aria "In questa reggia"

A contrasting use of ostinato can be found in the aria "In questa reggia" in Act II, after the Mandarin repeats his decree from the beginning of Act I that any suitor who fails to solve Turandot's three riddles will be executed, and before she goes on to pose the riddles to Calaf. The offstage children's chorus, reprising the Chinese melody from Act I (II, [42]), calls on the Princess to make her appearance. The children's call, doubled again by two unseen alto saxophones on stage and wordlessly by the adult chorus facing upstage, provides a musical introduction for Turandot.

In the aria she explains why she devised three riddles for any suitor wishing to marry her, and why execution awaits anyone who fails to solve them. Thousands of years ago, her ancestor Princess Lou-Ling was raped and murdered following her defeat in a war with the king of the Tartars. The riddles are her vengeance, because the purity of Lou-Ling is "reborn" in her. "No one shall ever have me," cries Turandot, because "she lives on in me." She warns the latest unknown suitor not to tempt fate: "The enigmas are three; death is one!" But Calaf ripostes with audacious vocal brinkmanship: "No! The enigmas are three; life is one!" They argue, one finally trying to drown out the other, as the crowd calls on Turandot to offer the foreign Prince the bold trial of the three riddles.

It is tempting to analyze the aria through the perspective of "la solita forma," the conventional format of a multi-partite aria or scene in nineteenth-century Italian opera

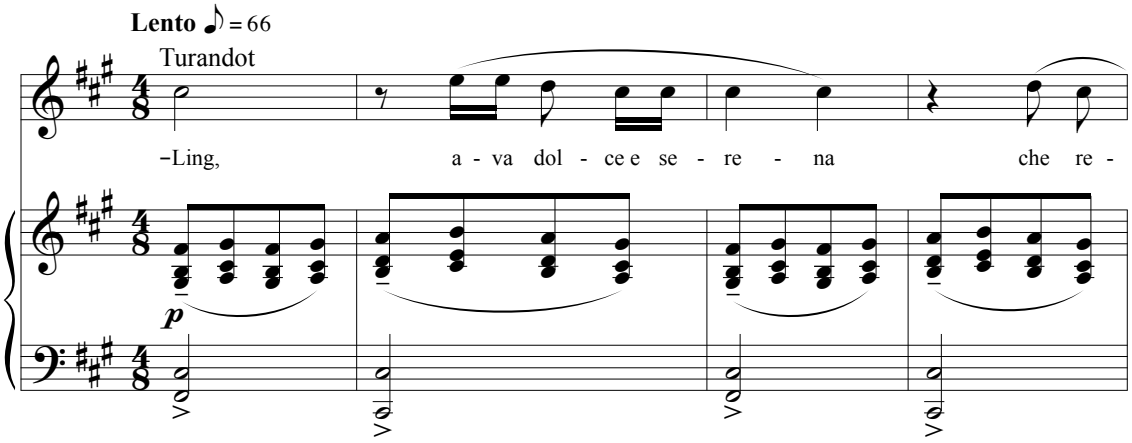
first articulated in 1859 by Abramo Basevi.[85] If the children's chorus is an introduction, then the initial declamations of Turandot (at II, [43]) might be perceived as the "usual" preceding recitative. The syllabic text setting, spare orchestral material, and unaccompanied moments of singing would support that. Her narration of Princess Lou-Ling's story might be heard as a *tempo di mezzo* ([44]). Short choral interjections between sections of *tempo di mezzo*, reminiscent of Bellini's and Donizetti's mature practice, provide continuity between sections; the crowd's participation heightens dramatic verisimilitude. After a strong cadence, the "aria" proper is begun with the orchestra and Turandot's exclamation "Mai nessun m'avrà!" (No one will ever have me!) (II, [47]). It turns out, however, that the "aria" is truncated by audacious interjections from Calaf, abruptly ascending changes of key, and, consequently and appropriately, no real resolution, as a choral peroration and orchestral coda provide a transition into the riddle scene. For Puccini, dramatic continuity supersedes formal demarcation lines.

What I am calling the *tempo di mezzo* here is based on simpler, more regular ostinati than we find in the executioners' chorus or in certain passages of *Gianni Schicchi*. There is a tonal scheme analogous to "la solita forma," at least until the beginning of the "aria." The children's introduction is clearly in D major, albeit with Mixolydian inflections. The *tempo di mezzo* alternates between F# minor and D minor (inflected by "white-note" Dorian modality). The "aria" begins in G-flat major, by means of an implied enharmonic perfect authentic cadence in F-sharp minor.

The use of ostinati within a quasi-traditional structure seems to serve a specific narrative purpose. When Turandot begins to tell the story of the Princess Lou-Ling, (II,

[85] See Harold S. Powers, "'La solita forma' and the Uses of Convention," *Acta musicologica* 59, no. 1 (1987): 65–90.

[44]) (Ex. 8) the ostinato consists of undulating seventh chords over a gentle tonic–dominant drone that initially gives the passage an almost mellow, relatively neutral emotional temperature in keeping with Turandot's legendary iciness.

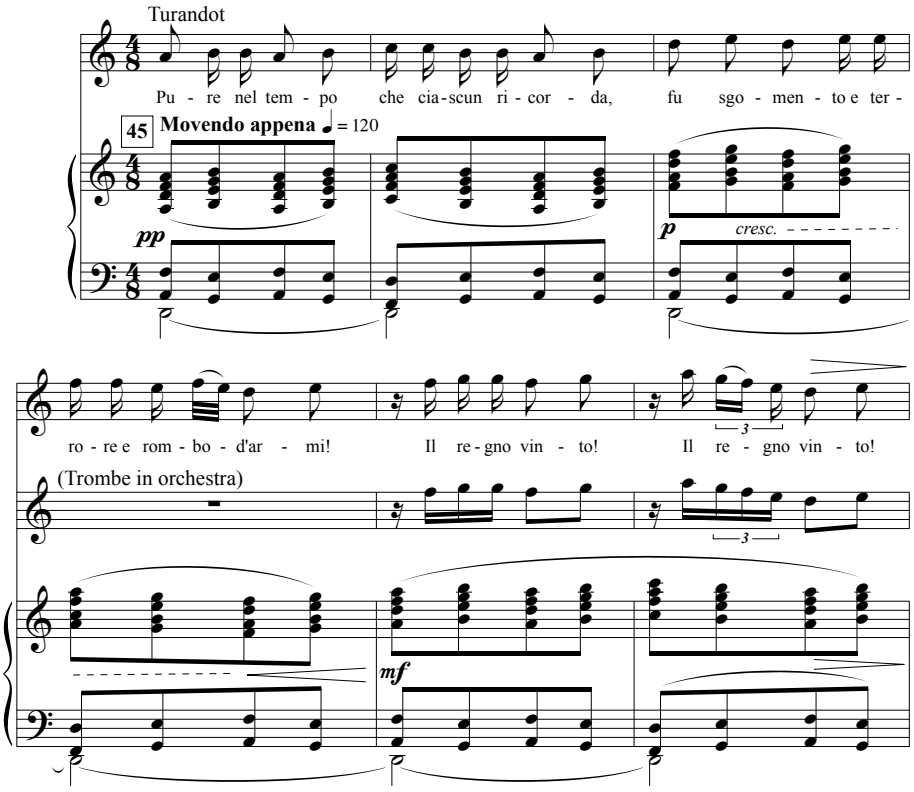


Example 8, *Turandot*, II, [44]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

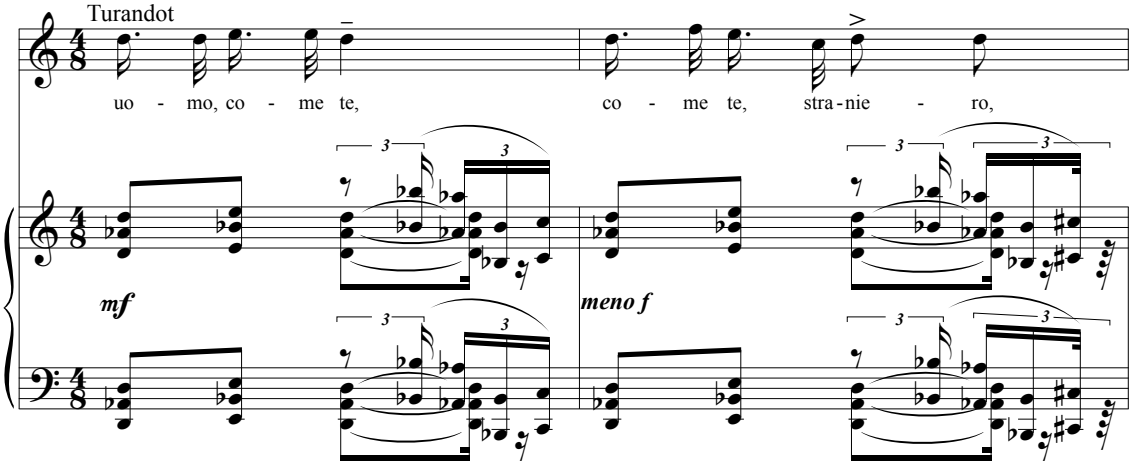
Subtle changes in the ostinato pitches only hint at a vaguely more tonal orientation, before reverting to dispassionate modal restraint. The new ostinato at II, [45] adds some higher layers of orchestral voices on each of its first two repetitions, providing a sense of rising anger in Turandot that is reinforced by her doubling by a trumpet in the orchestra (Ex.9).

Her strongest words so far, "… trascinato da un uomo, come te, straniero, là nella notte atroce, dove si spense la sua fresca voce!" (… dragged away by a man like you, stranger, there in the atrocious night, where her young voice was silenced), are underlined by a much more dissonant ostinato including parallel tritones, but still with a restrained quality of rising, then suppressed anger (Ex. 10). Another choral observation precedes the final ostinato (II, [46]+3). The tempo has not changed, and the parallel seventh chords are retained, but the note values are halved, causing a twofold increase in motion (Ex. 11). And although Turandot's anger seems to be increasing, the restrained modal quality of

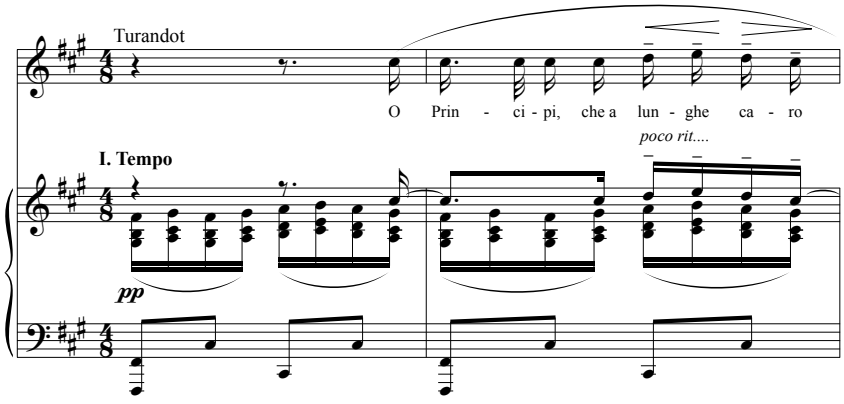
the ostinato keeps the emotional temperature in check, while the orchestra remains *pianissimo.*



Example 9, *Turandot*, II [45]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

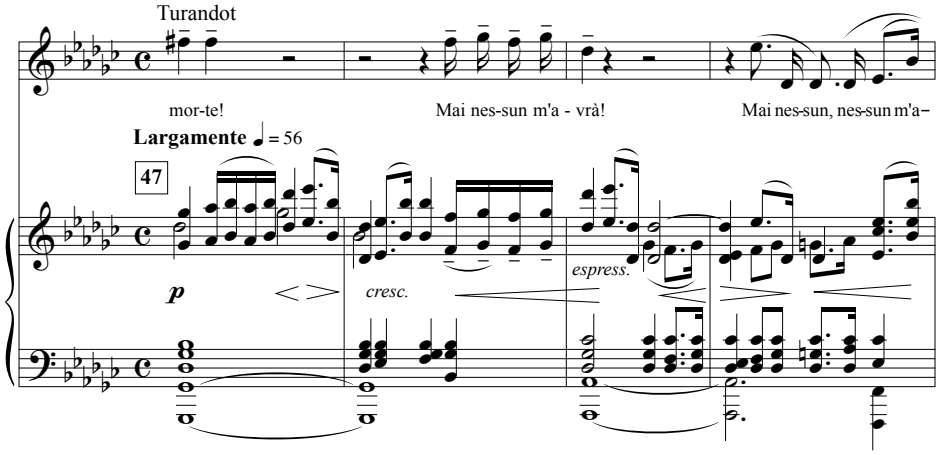


Example 10, *Turandot*, II, [45]+9. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.



Example 11, *Turandot*, II [46]+2. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

Therefore, the sudden burst of orchestral, then vocal, tonal lyricism has a jarring rhetorical effect ([47], Ex. 12). Up to this point, there has been no real "melody" to speak of. Although it's all a "big sing," the music has been text-driven. The frigid, emotionless Princess is suddenly made passionate, angry, warm-blooded, and resolute – by a reference to Puccini's early style.



Example 12, *Turandot*, II [47]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

The structure of this "aria" itself is worthy of consideration. Having the initial, richly doubled melody begun by the orchestra rather than the voice is the kind of late-*verismo* practice we are familiar from, say, *Tosca.* The sense of modal stasis and relatively neutral narration afforded by the cool ostinati has given way to melodic propulsion. The music

abruptly moves through six keys: G-flat major, B-flat major, D major, F# major, E-flat major, F# major, and A-flat major. But as Calaf dares to refute Turandot, audacious jumps to new keys provide an opportunity for vocal one-upmanship that thrills the audience and brings the singers to the upper reaches of their vocal ranges, suggesting the competition between prince and princess has pushed them close to breaking point. After arguing, they reach their vocal peaks together, contradicting one another as loudly and as high as possible.

But there is not yet any winner. It will take the riddles to establish that. This battle of wills is created by audaciously crude modulations, and it is the repetition of the same material in different keys, not tonal development, that creates a sense of progression. Rather than being a vehicle for locomotion and brutality, ostinato in this instance is initially a means for emotionally restrained narration. This is achieved, in part, by a less dissonant pitch organization within an apparently tonal, but non-developmental scheme. (There are similar passages in *Suor Angelica*, where a suggestion of antique religious music and the restrained and repetitive nature of convent life are provided by the parallelism of "white-note" ostinati. The waters of the Seine in *Il tabarro* are also suggested by such slower, rocking ostinati.)

The "aria" proper is a vehicle for resolve, passion, and anger. Taken as a whole, the preceding ostinato sections and the "aria" itself form a curious juxtaposition of old and new. The ostinati are not exactly tonal, but they are organized in a quasi-tonal sense. The "aria" is absolutely tonal, but it is not in one key; rather, it is based on non-developmental repetition of more or less the same material in several keys. There is no sense of tonal closure, nor is there any sense that one is needed.

CHAPTER 3: NEO-CLASSICISM IN PUCCINI'S LAST TWO OPERAS

Puccini is rarely mentioned in the same sentence as twentieth-century "neo-classicism," but an examination of his music in *Turandot* for the three Masks – Ping, Pang, and Pong – and many ensemble passages in *Gianni Schicchi* shows his ability to turn his hand to any one of several contemporary compositional styles, including neo-classicism, and apply them for dramatic purposes.

Neo-classicism at the time of Puccini

If we consider the exact time at which Puccini's late operas were composed, it is not really surprising that he might employ an identifiably neo-classical style. Neo-classicism was already on its way to becoming the dominant international musical style of the first half of the twentieth century. The composition of *Turandot* was contemporaneous with Stravinsky's first neo-classical opera, *Mavra* (1921–22). Stravinsky's neo-classical opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex* postdates *Turandot* by three years, and is *explicitly* structured as a series of monumental musical "panels" with little action per se, being more a drama of ritual rather than narrative. *Turandot* has ritualistic episodes, but more traditional narrative ploys, too, such as recitative, aria, duet and trio that propel the story and furnish plot information in a more traditional way (that is, in the manner of more recent nineteenth-century Italian opera).

Unlike other composers, who were in some fashion or other consistently neo-classical within specific pieces, we find Puccini employing neo-classicism only for specific dramatic or characterization purposes. Neo-classicism jostles and comingles with other styles. Neo-classicism is sometimes considered a reaction against Impressionism,

but Puccini juxtaposes both styles, with others, in *Turandot.* Puccini's music could sometimes be considered entirely neo-classical in the sense that he does evoke earlier music, even if it is that of the nineteenth century as well as the eighteenth; he uses tonality but often with discordant "wrong notes" and avoids traditional dominant chords. The "wrong" notes and chords of neo-classicism allow for grotesqueries that give the three Masks in *Turandot* sardonic or satirical wit. John C. Waterhouse has found an intriguing example of similarity between Puccini's music for the three Masks and music by Alfredo Casella that actually employs the indication *Allegro molto vivace e grottesco*.[86] The aesthetic category of the grotesque is an aspect of modernism to which we have already referred in *Gianni Schicchi.* That said, Puccini's neo-classical musical style does not always seem self-consciously so; it is obfuscated to some extent in that he did not, unlike other neo-classicists, reduce his orchestral forces to eighteenth-century models or turn his operas into chamber works.

If we define neo-classical music as being based harmonically on some kind of tonality, and having melodic, formal, or other elements that are redolent of historic musical styles, especially those of the eighteenth-century practice, or sometimes used for comic or ironic effect, Puccini fits the bill. The tendency to "look back" is not unique to early modernism, nor it is always necessary to fit an eighteenth-century mold exactly. Stravinsky's *Mass*, for example, is redolent of medieval practice. Harking back to Verdi (in opposition to Wagner) and nineteenth-century Italian opera more generally is a self-confessed characteristic of Stravinsky's neo-classicism,[87] while Puccini remains viewed as Verdi's most successful nineteenth-century successor. Chris Walton has noted that

[86] John C. Waterhouse, "Puccini's Debt to Casella," *Music and Musicians* 13, no. 6 (1965): 58. The piece in question is Casella's *Pupazzetti* ("little dolls") for piano duet, Op. 27 (1915).

[87] Walton, "Neo-classical Opera," 112.

neo-classicism can also be seen to be a "reaction against the German music drama in general"[88] and that neo-classicism of the time made possible a kind of "critical distance or ironic detachment."[89] The un-expressiveness of neo-classicism depersonalizes in music characters that are already alienating through their facelessness. Neo-classicism, especially when its modal or non-functional tonality avoids a dominant–tonic pull, can also be a way to express the un-erotic. In *Turandot*, for example, it serves to create the facelessness of the three Masks. Moreover, it allows wit through irony and distortion.

The neo-classical impulse resides in *Gianni Schicchi* and *Turandot* in different ways. Contextually, it is possible even to see reversions to late-Romantic diatonicism, such as the occasional and unexpected turns to diatonic lyricism we hear from Ping, Pang, and Pong, as symptomatic of a neo-classical tendency, even if the style itself is not obviously or always neo-classical. It is a "look back" of one kind (melodramatic, Italian lyricism) juxtaposed with another (acerbic, witty "wrong" notes and harmonies). Puccini also seems to be looking back at an earlier version of himself, in a way historicizing himself and his tradition. By this point in history, Italian opera had "entered into a dynamic relationship with tradition, thereby pointing the way to a kind of dialectic"[90] between past and present musical styles.

It is historically, stylistically, and aesthetically apposite that Ping, Pang, and Pong are characterized in music with a neo-classical style. The Chinese setting notwithstanding, the three Masks belong to the tradition of the *commedia dell'arte*. The source of the opera was the eighteenth-century version of the fable by Carlo Gozzi

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[88] Ibid., 108.
[89] Ibid., 107.
[90] Virgilio Bernardoni, "Puccini and the Dissolution of the Italian Tradition," in Melvyn Cooke, ed,, *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 32.

(1720–1806) that had been recently set (1917) by the neo-classically-inclined Busoni, who, unlike Puccini, retained the characters of Pantalone and Truffaldino.[91] Twentieth-century operas that were conceived neo-classically tended to be number operas after eighteenth-century models, from Busoni's *Arlecchino* to Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress.* Ashbrook and Powers have demonstrated that *Turandot* can plausibly be conceived as a number opera—doing so establishes it as a non-Wagnerian opera—albeit one that simultaneously can be rationalized as a series of unfolding and usually musically unrelated "frames" or "panels" that provide a dynamic continuity missing from traditional number operas.[92]

Puccini plays with the "dehumanization principle"[93] offered by the neo-classical style with respect to the three Masks. On the one hand they are un-empathetic inhibitors of Calaf's desire to challenge Turandot; on the other, moments of Romantic tonality give us a momentary, tantalizing glimpse of their humanity under the mask—fleeting revelations of their desires and dreams. For a moment they seem "real." The push and pull of the unthinking functionaries and "real" characters is part of their comedic characterization. They flit between being eighteenth-century *commedia dell'arte* figures, faceless twentieth-century automatons of alienation, and nineteenth-century sentimentalists.

There were precedents for a kind of early neo-classicist, historicist approach by other recent Italian opera composers. We tend to forget that Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*,

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[91] Chris Walton, "Neo-classical Opera," in Mervyn Cooke, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century Opera*, 110.

[92] See Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 15–36.

[93] A term used with regard to Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* by Marina Frolova-Walker in "Russian Opera: Between Modernism and Romanticism," in *Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, 182.

perhaps considered the apex of *verismo*, has its own neo-classical aspect in the music for the show-within-a-show, a rather rococo minuet with filigree flourishes on the violin, scored for a smaller orchestra to distinguish it from the show proper (that is, to distinguish the characters of the play within from their "real" characters), in what is surely a reference to eighteenth-century Italian opera buffa. Puccini had himself created a pastiche of the eighteenth century, in a rather different way from Leoncavallo, in the second act of *Manon Lescaut*, integrating rococo gestures into his late nineteenth-century idiom.[94]

So what kind of neo-classicist was Puccini? In answering this question, it will be useful to draw on Martha Hyde's typologies of Stravinsky's imitation of older music.[95] There is *reverential* imitation, in which pre-existing music is adapted and given modern affectations. Another is *heuristic* imitation, which mimics older genres or formulae, such as the symphony, but in a way that "forces us to recognize" the anachronism; the older model is "recast … using a modern vernacular." *Eclectic* imitation is the most frequent: past styles "mingle" with each other, such as Classical phrasing or Baroque-style counterpoint, or diatonicism co-existing with octatonicism. Finally, *dialectical* imitation is a more "aggressive dialogue between a piece and its model."

Let us examine the first vocal entrance of the Masks in Act I, when they step in to bar the Prince from striking the gong that will initiate his first challenge to Turandot ("Fermo! Che fai?").

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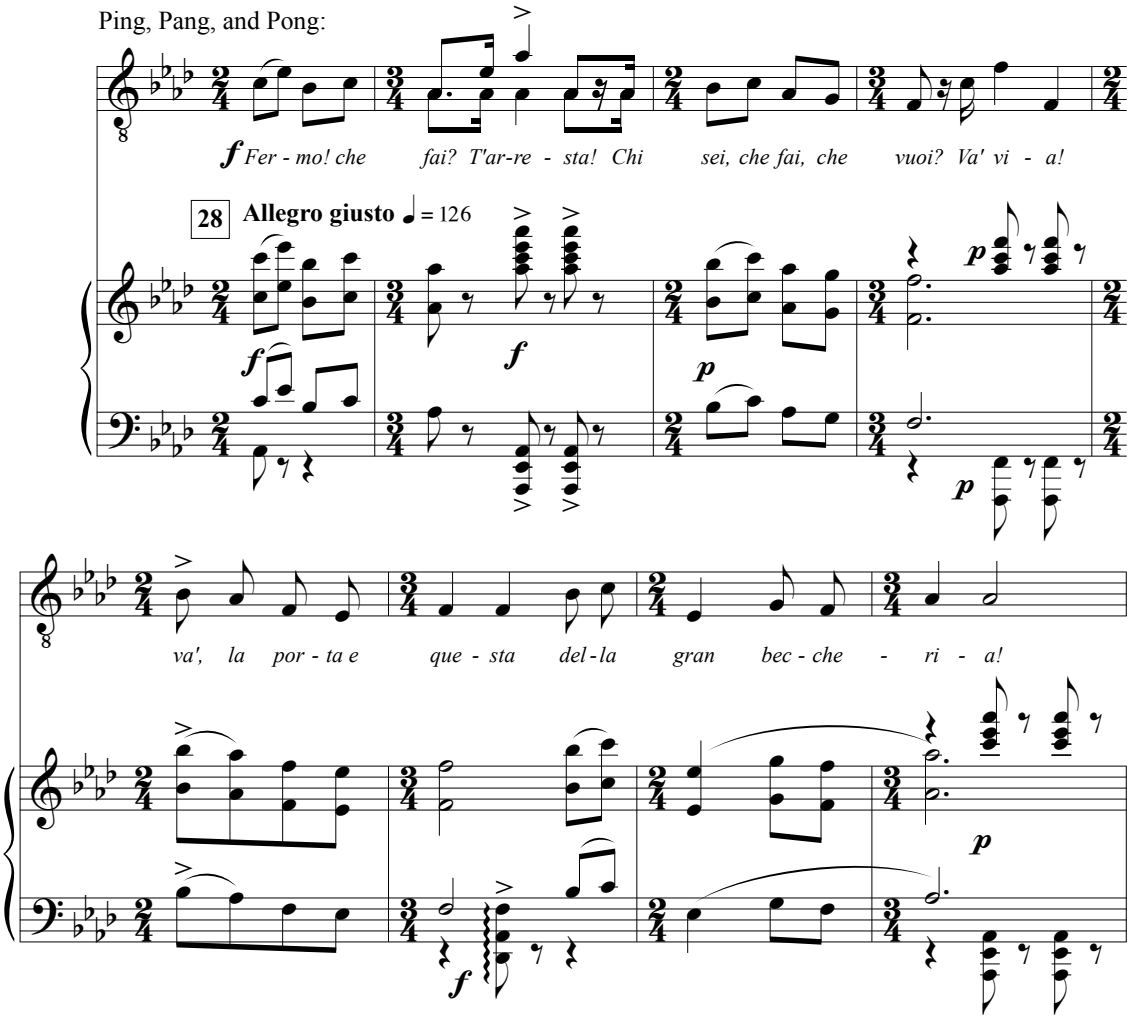
[94] For more on this see Michele Girardi, "La rappresentazione musicale dell'atmosfera settecentesca nel second'atto di 'Manon Lescaut,'" in *Esotismo e colore*, 63–82.

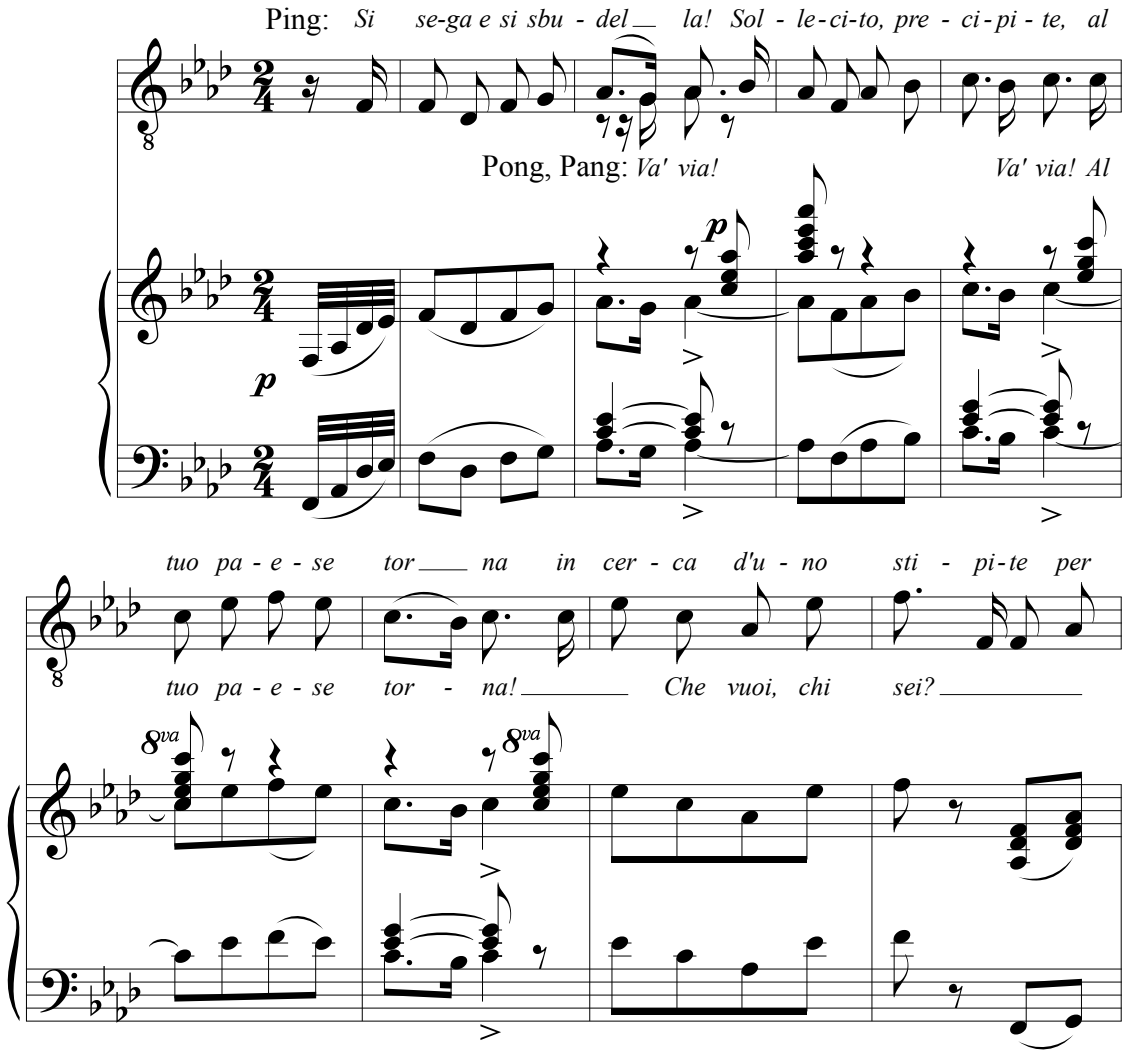
[95] Martha Hyde, "Stravinsky's Neoclassicism," in Jonathan Cross, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 98-136. According to Hyde, examples of "reverential imitation" include *Pulcinella* and *The Fairy's Kiss*; "heuristic imitation" includes the *Symphony in C*; "eclectic imitation," *Oedipus Rex* and the *Octet*; and the best example of "dialectical imitation" is *The Rake's Progress*.



Example 13, *Turandot*, I, [28]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

The intervallic features of their unison melody make it predominantly, and immediately perceivable as, pentatonic—therefore Chinese. It has the asymmetrical characteristic of a folk melody with irregular meter. Even an attempt to re-write the melody to create a normative, balanced melody in 2/4 or 4/4 time cannot restore it to metrical regularity, mainly because the melodic B-flat–C contour before low E-flat always sounds anacrusic.

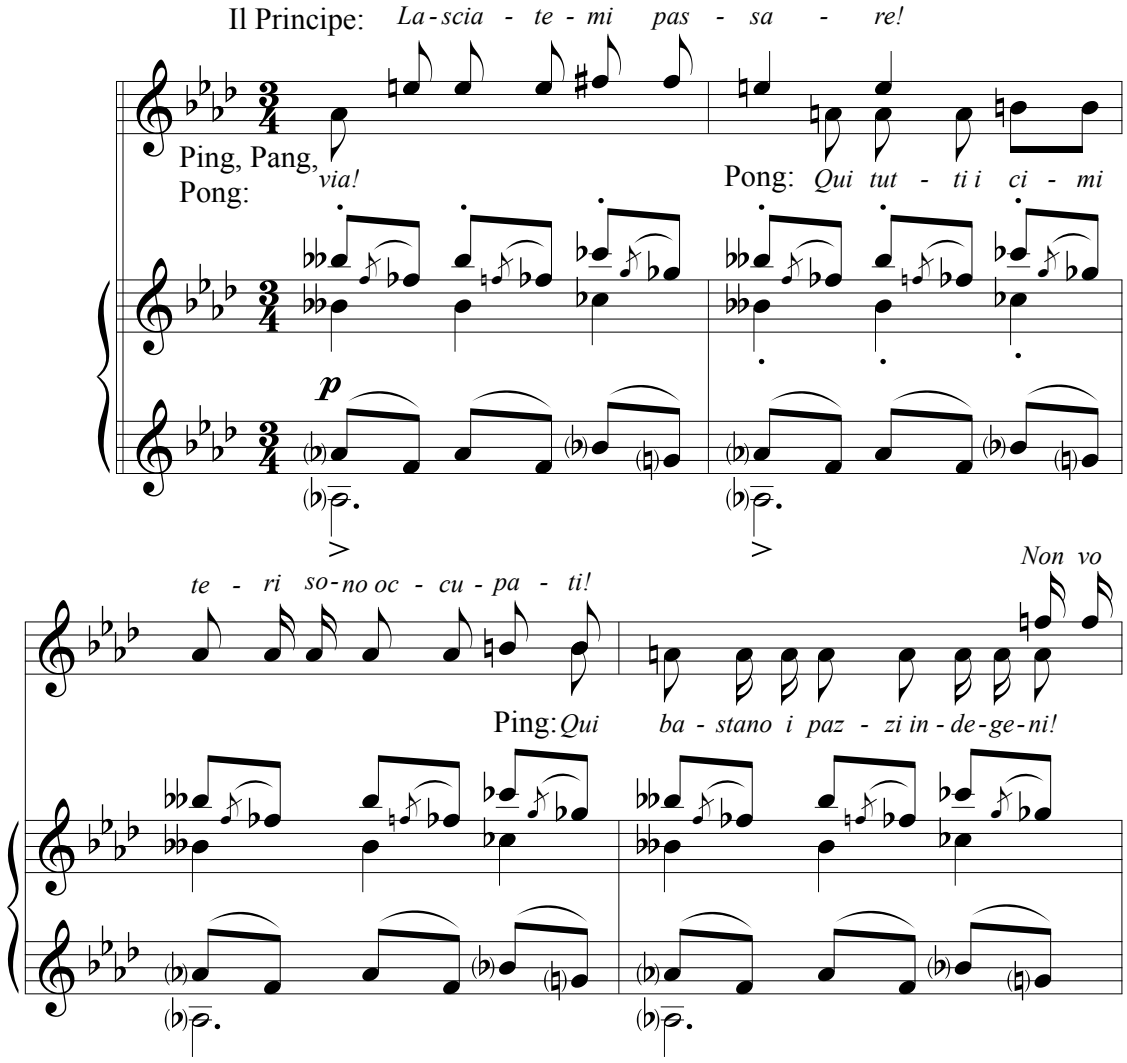
Harmonically, the melody is centered on the triad of A-flat major. The first phrase suggests a harmonization of I–vi–IV–V–I, but the parallel fifths negate a sense of tonality and promote modality. The new melodic material introduced by Ping at [29]+7 (Ex. 14),



Example 14, *Turandot*, I [29]+7. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

doubled at the unison and octave, remains centered on a D-flat–A-flat axis, and continues modally with harmonization by vi–V–III–ii, imparting a sense of modality (that, incidentally, would not be amiss in an English folksong setting by Vaughan Williams).

The Prince's frustration and alienation by the three Masks is expressed by an outburst of harshly dissonant bitonal ostinati at [30]+1, Ex. 15.



Example 15, *Turandot*, I [30]+1. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

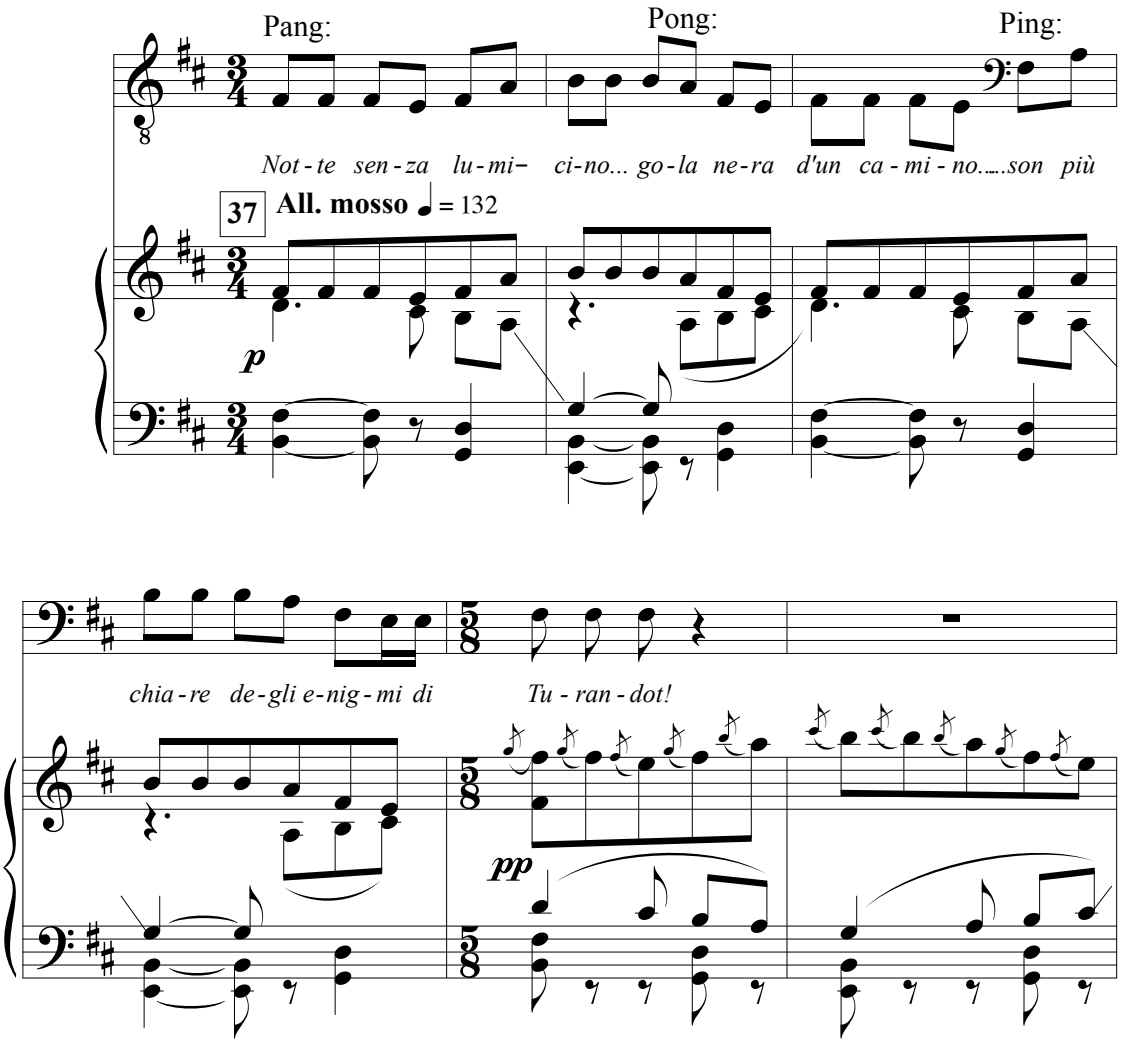
Given that he is the one most often assigned lyrical music, this is a jarring dramatic effect which, although fleeting, makes an insistent point. This harsh exchange between the four is succeeded by a simple diatonic, Classically balanced melodic phrase of antecedent and consequent halves, with the topos of a (Classical) dance in 3/4 time.

Apparently designed to goad the prince, it also becomes a reminiscence motive for the Three Masks.

Looking at this entire episode overall ([28]–[35]), its structure exhibits a certain repetitive, schematic, and Classical symmetry that can be reduced to ABCABA. But at the local level the melodic structure is asymmetrical, the harmony is modally ambiguous or borderline atonal, and the whole episode is texturally multi-topical, encompassing *Chinoiserie,* folk-song, brutal modernism, and possibly even Classical dance. I suggest that it constitutes a particularly Puccinian *eclectic* neo-classicism.

The Masks later taunt the Prince about the unsolvability of Turandot's riddles with the most economical and simplistic musical blend of orientalism, modal harmony, and mixed rhythmic meters ([37], Ex. 16). The pentatonic melody that the three Masks share is a Chinese original,[96] doubled by unison flutes and harmonized by three parallel triads (B minor, G major, E minor) in the key of B minor. Again, any dominant pull is totally avoided. The melody, no more than a two-measure fragment, is repeated seven times. The second and fifth repetitions are in 5/8 time (the fragment is shorn of one F-sharp repetition to accommodate the new meter). This quality creates a short palindromic "panel" of which the phrase structure might be rendered (in numbers of measures) 4–2–4–2–4 (Ex. 16).

[96] The source melody is quoted by Carner: *Puccini*, 521.

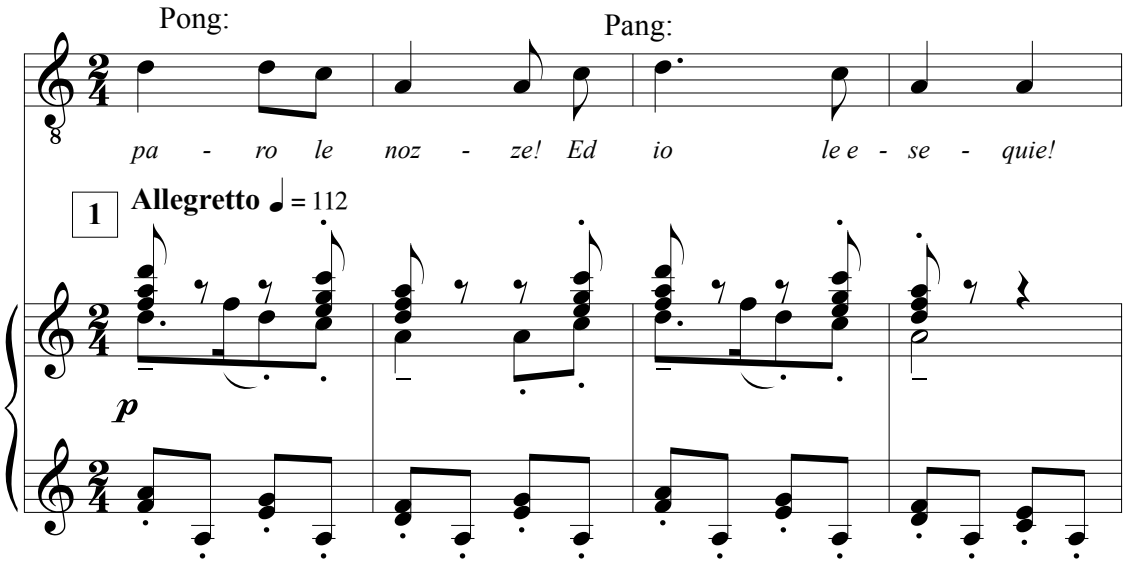


Example 16, *Turandot*, I [37]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

Puccini, the composer of grand opera, is using a frivolous fragment, a minimum of musical means, to suggest the unshakeable, unchanging, unfeeling nature of these momentarily child-like functionaries of state, reducing them to cyphers. This moment is telling because it is a veritable cliché of late nineteenth-century orientalism that might belong in the music hall, or perhaps *The Mikado,* although the mixed meter might elevate it slightly to "modern" music, as well as reinforce the exoticism. A modern approach to exoticism is also suggested by having the two flutes play in unison, creating a subtle *vox humana* effect that sounds less like the "Western" flute. Even so, in isolation, or even in

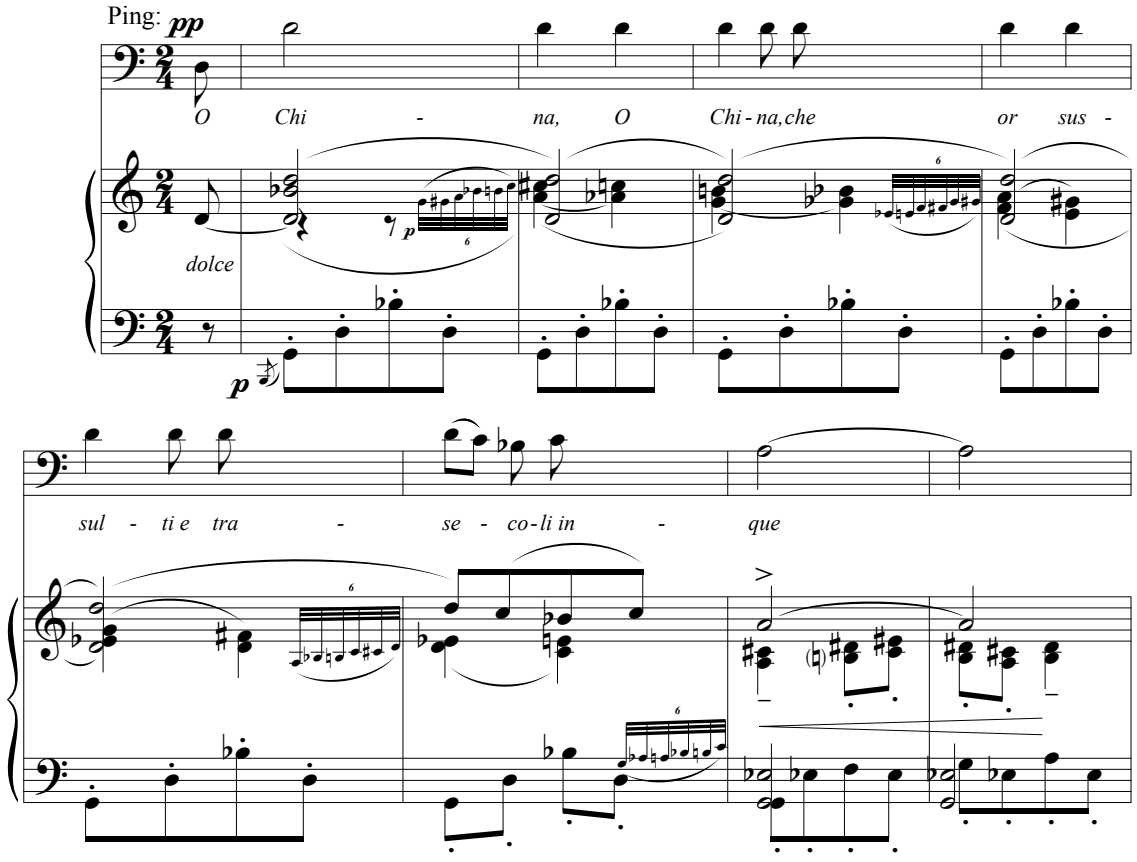
context, this passage hardly seems like a moment of high art. A mixing of "high" and "low," or a blurring of the boundaries between them, is, however, another hallmark of early modernism (one only has to think of Mahler's symphonies as a starting point for discussion). But Puccini's "low" art is not gratuitous: the Masks are, after all, inexpressively emphasizing the obstinate hardness of Turandot's enigmas. And we tend generally to underestimate the connection that "serious" composers have with popular culture. But it is a mistake to do so. Puccini, after all, did write an operetta for Vienna (*La rondine*), Schoenberg was highly acquainted with the cabaret song in Berlin, and Stravinsky used jazz.

Act II scene 1 demonstrates the useful straightforwardness of simple "ethnic" and what I have argued are neo-classical gestures, such as the original pentatonic folk melody and its accompaniment at [1] that Pong and Pang share as they sing about nuptial or funeral arrangements (being to all intents and purposes one and the same) (Ex. 17).



Example 17, *Turandot*, II, [1]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

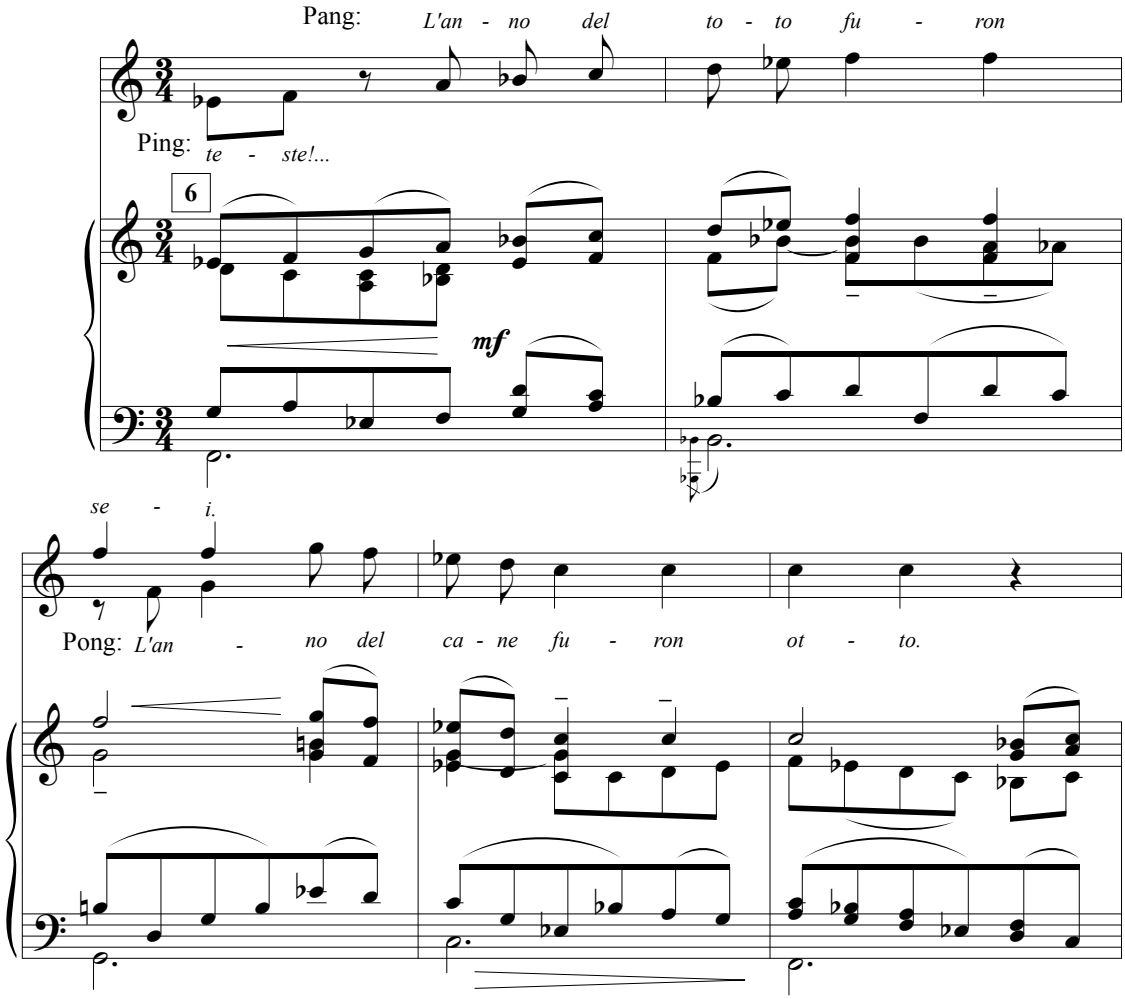
But that passage contrasts with Ping's "O China!" ([3]–[4]), which combines a simple broken-chord G-minor accompaniment with chromatic orchestral flashes of late nineteenth-century exoticism that would not be out of place in Viennese operetta (Ex. 18).



Example 18, Turandot, II [3]+4. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

The Lydian C sharp and the parallel thirds outlining a competing Lydian tonal center of A (initially by violins II, oboe, and clarinet, later bolstered by harp and celeste) ensconce us in a momentary, exotic Other. A real moment of surprise occurs when Pang takes up the melody we first heard in Act I to begin a brief diatonic, lyrical trio in B-flat major ([6]) about the various Chinese years (Ex. 19). Puccini's compositional training in *solfeggio* and counterpoint is manifest in the contrapuntal treatment of the voice parts and

in the voice-leading of the inner harmonic orchestral parts. Here some "classical" features, beginning with harmony that is tonal and straightforward, are mixed with late nineteenth-century enrichment by chromatic passing tones that seems to momentarily humanize them.



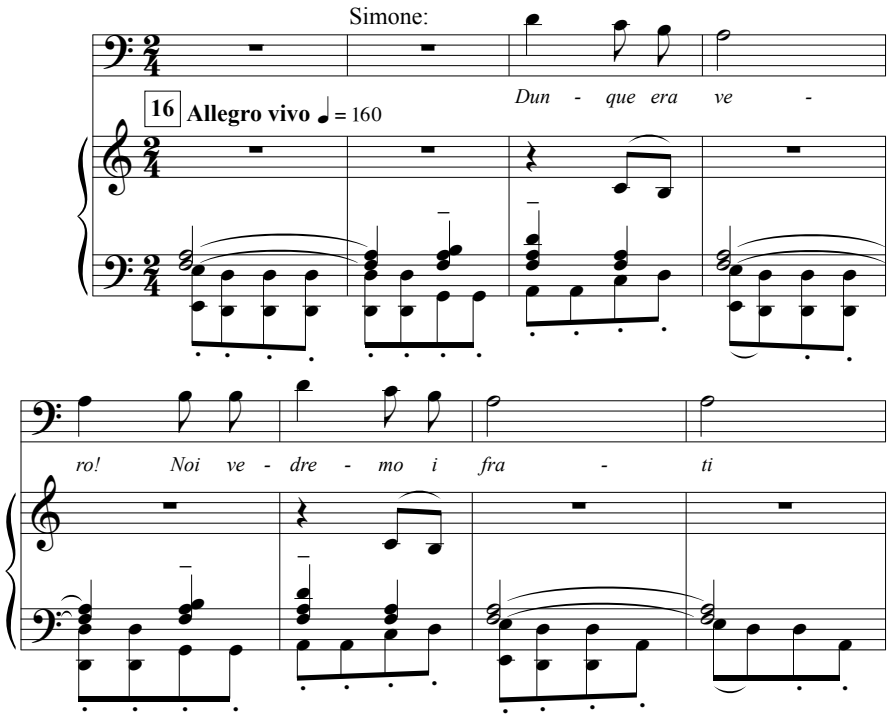
Example 19, *Turandot*, II [6] © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

The *opera buffa* Ensemble in *Gianni Schicchi*

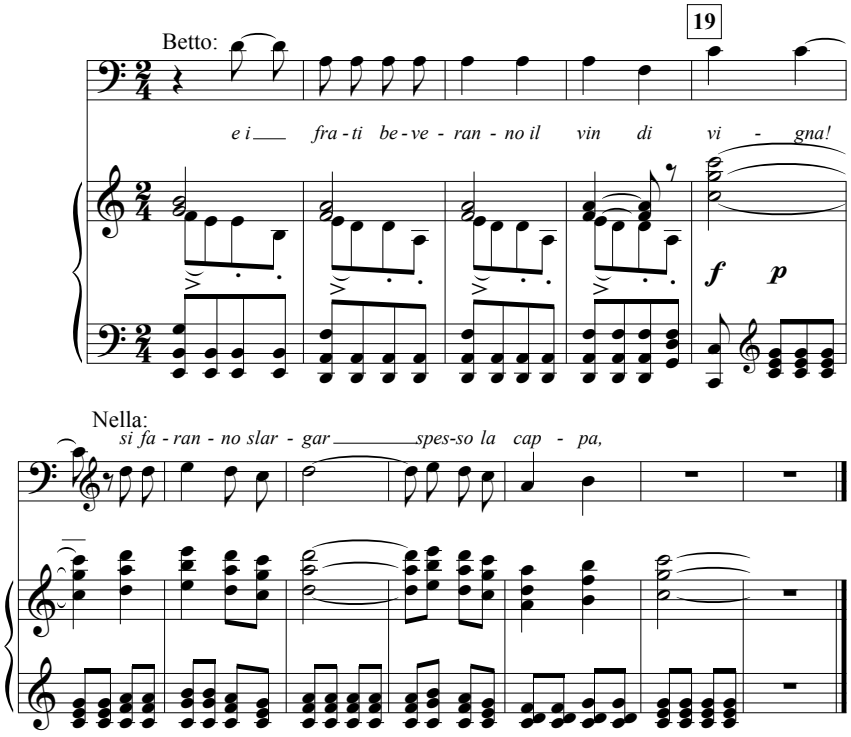
In *Gianni Schicchi*, fast-paced ensembles, tonally oriented in some way but with "wrong notes," recall the fast final movements of multi-section eighteenth-century *opere buffe* and the *stretto* finales of Rossini. These ensembles consciously "look back," but it is not the kind of heuristic neo-classicism, say, of Prokofiev's "Classical" Symphony or the reverential neo-classicism of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella.* The ensembles are set pulsing without musical preamble, as if they are a reaction to what precedes them. I do not discern a reverential nod to the past so much as a distortion of it. The ensembles do not fall easily into one of Hyde's typologies, although we might argue that they are idiosyncratically strong examples of *dialectical* neo-classicism in a way that *The Rake's Progress* is not.

The ensemble that starts at [16], after the Donatis read Buoso's Will and learn that they have been disinherited, starts with suppressed but motoric rage after silent disbelief. It is a multivalent embrace of musical modernism. At first it seems tonal, almost Mozartian, but it lacks tonal organization bound by a clear tonic–dominant–tonic teleology (Ex. 20).

When we do reach a strongly defined tonic, at [19], it is preceded mainly by ii. An extremely short eighth-note dominant chord (lacking the third but including the second) comes before [19], but C major is really confirmed only by the subsequent phrase (the next seven measures) (Ex. 21).

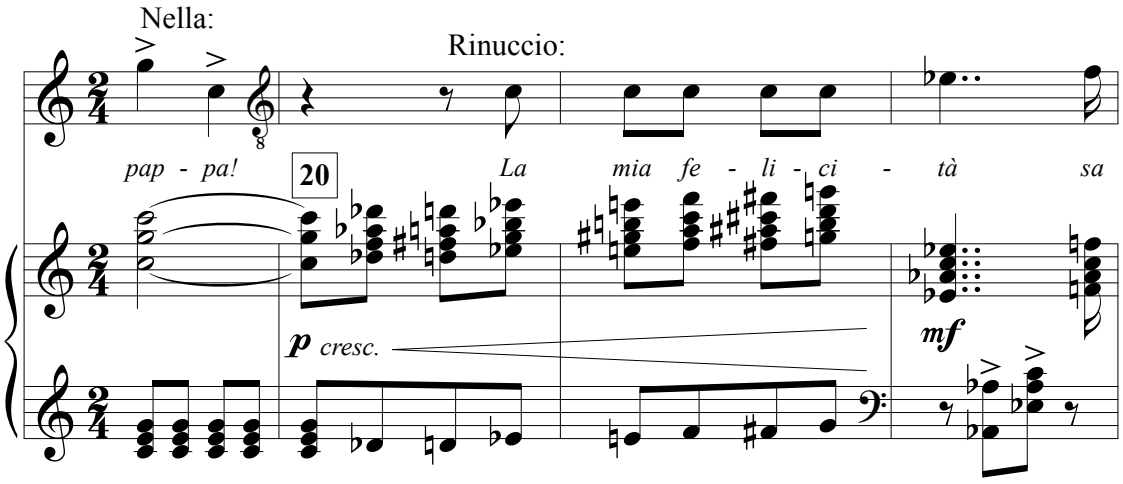


Example 20, *Gianni Schicchi*, [16]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.



Example 21, *Gianni Schicchi*, [19]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

A shift to the submediant (approached chromatically via successive half-step triadic chords) takes place at [20], recalling a progression common to Rossini (and Schubert). It returns to the tonic minor (Zita's line "Fate schioccar la lingua col palato!"), again with an avoidance of a true dominant, before giving way to a more overtly modernist approach before [21][97] (Ex. 22).



Example 22, *Gianni Schicchi*, [20]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

As far as harmony goes, a residue of the Rossinian tonic–mediant progression is evident at [21] (Ex. 23, see page 112) as a C-orientation gives way to dissonant E flat; while this is obfuscated on the one hand by the bitonality suggested in the parallel E-minor and G-minor triads, the sense of all the triadic roots shifting in thirds reinforces a modulatory back and forth that seems like an exceptionally modern update of an old harmonic formula. A less ambiguous shift to a tonal A-flat major is implied via voice-leading in the orchestra ([21]+15; see the first sixteenth note of each group, rising towards A-flat) and via the coalescence towards an implied dominant in the concurrently repeated eighth-note

[97] See William Rothstein, "Common-tone Tonality in Italian Romantic Opera: An Introduction," *Music Theory Online* 14, no. 1 (March 2008); http://mto.societymusictheory.org/issues/mto.08.14.1/mto.08.14.1.rothstein.html#FN7REF (accessed January 20, 2011). Rothstein is discussing early Romantic opera specifically. I am drawing a parallel between the harmonic usage of Rossini with that of Puccini in this specific instance.

chords. The "dominant" chord, in this instance, has a dissonant augmented fifth, rather than a perfect fifth. The new tonal passage eventually receives full closure (one measure before [24]), although it's more of a full "slump," as the Donatis run out of steam, exhausted by their own rage.

Examining the ostinati at a more local level, what begins at [21] builds tension by means of changing repetitions, in a manner not unlike Stravinsky's "rhythms of reiteration," as articulated by Horlacher.[98] Puccini uses the ostinati as a means of formal development in lieu of, say, functional harmony. Stravinsky's neo-classical practice is also notable for its usage of ostinato, notably in the third movement of the *Symphony of Psalms.*

An examination of the full score at [21] (page 112) reveals several layers of simultaneous, discrete ostinati. Pulsating eighth-note motion is predominant, on the pitches C–E-flat–G-flat–B-flat alternating with E-flat–B-flat–E-flat in the strings, harp, celeste, and horns. The violins have their own descending sixteenth-note ostinato that reinforces and adds another motoric layer to these pitch collections. At the same time, flutes, oboes, and English horn, joined by trumpets, have a separate layer in triple time that outlines the alternating triads of E minor and G major. Together these layers create a brief, alternating, discordant, bitonal axis. The first eight measures of [21] are made up of two identical repetitions of the first four measures; the pattern is then broken up into six two-measure patterns, creating a sense of build-up. This build-up is increased as the trumpets dispense with the triplet figure and the major triad (at [21]+15) to play a discordant triad to a duple-time, military drum-style rhythm with medial sixteenth notes.

[98] Gretchen Horlacher, "Rhythms of Reiteration: Formal Development in Stravinsky's Ostinati," *Music Theory Spectrum* 14, no. 2 (autumn 1992): 171–87.

This new rhythm quickens the pace, helping to propel the music towards the arrival of diatonic A-flat major. At the same time, there are new ostinati of eighth-note chordal tritones (oboes, English horn, violin II) and disjunctive eighth-note patterns, mainly at the tritone (clarinets, violas) which, together with a brief E-flat pedal tone on horns and celli that cascades towards A-flat, create a kind of dissonant "dominant" chord that allows us to hear diatonic A flat major at [21]+23 and a recap of Rinuccio's melody from [20].

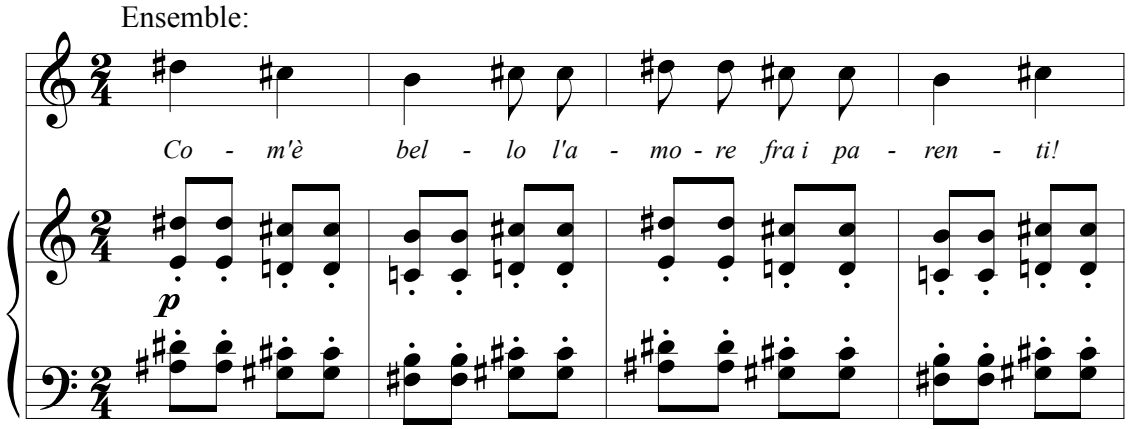
The musical structure is mainly based on repetition of short rhythmic–melodic fragments. The passage from the moment Zita sarcastically and mockingly screams "A voi, poveri frati"– as the family envisages the gluttonous monks devouring a range of delicacies while laughing their heads off at the family's disinheritance ([20]+25) – continues the driving, fast eighth-notes, but enters a period of almost total dissonance: an absence of melody, bitonal harmonies; multiple, simultaneous ostinati; and one significant larger-scale motivic repetition (of Rinuccio's motive) that is tonally oriented but not in any one "key." A grating orchestral mocking gesture redolent of the schoolyard bully, several octaves higher (4 before [21]), intensifies the discordance.

The appoggiatura that dominates what melodic material there is in this ensemble (here it begins with Gherardo's "Aprite le dispense") becomes the bona fide Baroque sob, a veritable *suspiratio.* This simple two-note figure, of course, begins the opera when the Donatis are ostentatiously "mourning" Buoso. The two-note sobbing gesture is used as a structural device many times in the opera (such as during Schicchi's dictation of the will at [72]). But it also becomes laughter. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference: they are flip sides of the same coin.

The ensemble that begins at [52] is an outburst of enthusiastic joy, a reaction to Schicchi's aria in which he describes to them his plan to impersonate the dead Buoso and dictate a new final Will and Testament to his lawyer. It begins with a celebratory, affirmative threefold outcry of "Schicchi!" in an emphatic C minor, as a response to Schicchi's final grandiose Verdian cadence on a dominant high G—which is, in yet another dissonant, modernist twist, underlined with a concomitant G major triad mid-orchestra simultaneously distorted by a superimposed A-flat–D–G–B-flat chord in the treble, and a rising chromatic scale in the bass. The family's unanimity is quickly diffused into fragmented cries of "Schicchi," calls to fetch the lawyer, and individual asides, until they quickly merge into unison for "Com'è bello l'amore fra parenti" (How beautiful is the love between relatives).

Once again, most of the singing could barely be considered melodic, consisting of short lines that outline Schicchi's name (the two-syllable fragment of tears and laughter also works for the eponymous protagonist's name), and some other lines of text that are grafted onto the short orchestral figurations which in their articulations and style are arguably neo-classical. Again, the musical structure is mainly based on repetition of a series of discrete fragments to create a build-up of excitement that reaches a climax in "Com'è bello l'amore fra parenti." However, although the giddy tempo and rhythm mirror the semantic meaning of the words, the pitches increase in dissonance. For example, as Zita, Nella, and La Ciesca sing "O giorno d'allegrezza! La beffa ai frati è bella!" (O day of happiness, the joke on the friars is beautiful!), the orchestra pecks out a series of open parallel intervals of mainly tritones and fifths at intervals that only increase their dissonance. By "Com'è bello l'amore fra parenti" the 3–2–1 melody is almost as

dissonant as it could get, with the singers' infantile vocal lines being paralleled in the orchestra in major sevenths and fourths (Ex. 24).

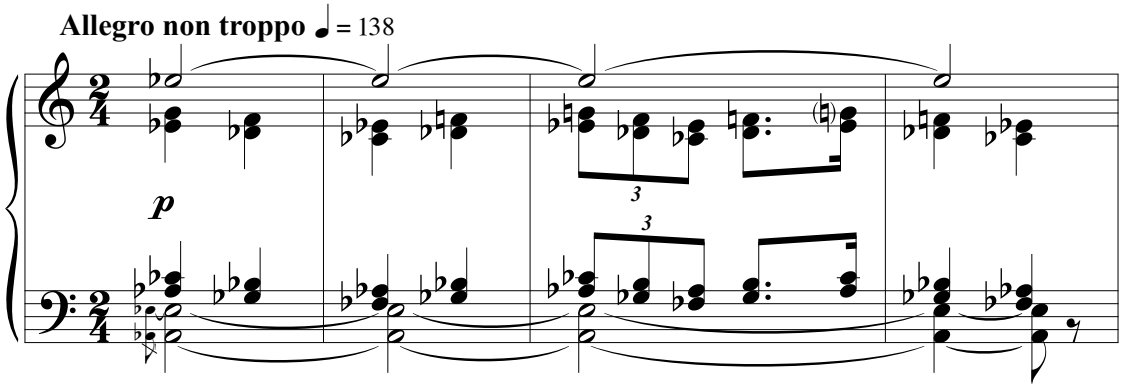


Example 24, *Gianni Schicchi*, [52]+24. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

Leonard Bernstein once asked this question: "Why do children tease one another in a specific singsong way?" (He was talking of two syllables on a descending minor third, repeated). His response: "Research seems to indicate that his exact constellation of two notes (and its three-note variant) is the same all over the world, wherever children tease each other, on every continent and in every culture." It is a "mono-linguistic *universal.*"[99] I suggest that Puccini was using a very similar "mono-linguistic universal" by employing a childlike singsong device of glee for the Donatis after Schicchi's successful impersonation of Buoso to the doctor. They sing a giddy passage knowing that Schicchi could alter the Will by impersonating the deceased ([52]–[53]). This section culminates in a unison refrain again extolling the value of familial bonds ("Com'è bello l'amore fra i parenti" – how beautiful is love between relations). In the major mode, it uses, stepwise, only scales degrees 3, 2, and 1.

[99] Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 16–17.

This melody is "wrong" for a couple of reasons. Children are considered the embodiment of innocence, whereas the Donatis exhibit precisely the opposite characteristic. There is no question in my mind that this is an evocation of children's song and games, and we understand it, because the infantilism is universal. It is ironic that the orchestra retains the children's 3–2–1 melody but it is played simultaneously in three different pitch collections, causing dissonance near atonality. The childlike song is warped. A related childlike refrain occurs at [54], and also employs scale degrees 3,2,1, in a manner not unlike "Ring a Ring o' Roses." (Ex. 25).

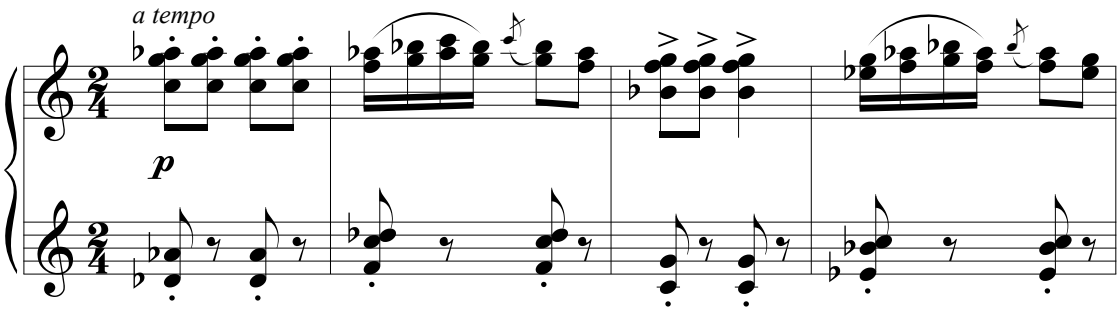


Example 25, *Gianni Schicchi*, [54]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

This refrain notably returns later to accompany the raging tantrums of the Donatis as they ransack Buoso's house like possessed, marauding toddlers ([81]). All in all, it's a strange opera buffa ensemble, presenting in musical terms the comic antithesis of civilized, rational behavior by adults.

One musical moment that has long intrigued me in *Gianni Schicchi* is the once-only *Pulcinella*-like phrase at [55]+20 that seems to be a self-contained but explicit neo-classical gesture (Ex. 26). It is unique, seemingly unrelated to anything else at all in the score, just a fragment of connective material that somehow seems to cry back to

eighteenth-century rationalism at a point when the music is about to explode into frenetic irrationalism.



Example 26, *Gianni Schicchi*, [55]+20. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

The subsequent ensemble bursts forth ([56]) in a radically different manner from our fleeting "Pergolesi moment" when the Donatis expode into gleeful greed at the prospect of dishonestly re-inheriting Buoso's worldly goods – by means of Gianni Schicchi's wily impersonation of their departed relative. As they do, Schicchi comments on the "love among families" and laughs out loud. There is no real vocal melody to speak of; the ambitus of most outbursts is only that of the infantile third. Furthermore, the maniacal greed of the Donatis is intensified by repetition. The tempo is suddenly very fast (quarter = 160). Note that the orchestral three-measure figure at [56] is repeated, then repeated again in a higher tessitura with faster notes (now triplets rather than duplets). The repeated pattern is then sped up by a reduction of the three-measure figure to a two-measure figure. To put it another way, there is a change of hypermeter from triple to duple time. Meanwhile, the sung patter builds rapidly with mainly monotonous declamations as the orchestra violently blares the planed chords we heard first at [54] (at which point the family members had, in turn, first dared to enunciate their lust for

specific property of Buoso's). The metaphorical feeding frenzy is halted only by a "phenomenal" orchestral voice.[100] To their great relief, they find out the bell was not for Buoso: his death remains known only to them, Gianni Schicci, Rinuccio, and Lauretta—all of whom stand to gain from it. The most self-consciously modernist features of this ensemble are its multi-layered simultaneous ostinato and continuous dissonance, achieved in part by grating parallel seconds in the orchestra. Even real consonance, such as the melodic vocal fifths during the high tremolo G (in the strings) at the *stringendo*, only serves to reinforce the subsequent dissonance between the singers' unison–octave Gs and the orchestra's outburst below them. (This moment of onstage unanimity of pitch is a fine example of Puccini making sure a huge orchestra does not drown out the singers).

The dramatic effect of this scene is that the Donatis' greed goes beyond all reason. They are not speaking to anyone or listening to anyone. It seems that they are all having private thoughts that are articulated screamingly amid a colossal orchestral din. Perhaps it's strange that all this unpleasantness has the capacity to make us laugh.

The Quartet

The genre of the quartet itself, allowing four characters to say four disparate things, is a great device of nineteenth-century opera, and Puccini had mastered it famously in the third act of *La bohème*. Verdi's famous example in *Rigoletto* is an important forebear. Quartets may be counter to dramatic verisimilitude, but they can offer the audience a simultaneous insight into characters' varied emotional states. Leibowitz ventures that

[100] See my reference to Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, in Chapter 2.

Puccini's innovative use of the quartet in *La bohème* "breathes new life" into an old tradition.[101]

Quartets can also be realistic, as in when people shout at each other in anger without paying heed to their opponent's point of view. Such is the mimetic effect of the short-lived quartet that takes place in *Gianni Schicchi* ([38]). The fact that it might be "realistic" aside, it can be *heard* as an anachronism. Given the frenetic narrative pace of the prior ensemble and that up to this point utterances by the characters have either been solo or unanimous, the quartet that "breaks out," following an argument between Schicchi and Zita about her nephew Rinuccio's desire to marry Schicchi's daughter Lauretta, seems like a sudden throwback to earlier opera – a neo-classical reference.

Unlike the example in *La bohème*, this brief quartet is an "open" number in two distinct musical styles. Initially, the orchestra, rather than the singers, seems to drive the argument. The preceding *allegro vivo* makes it seem comparatively static, compounded by the relatively slow harmonic rhythm. Vocal outbursts are rhythmically strong but regular, and the violins have four-square arpeggiated passagework. The music seems tonal, as a firmly established C-minor chord over four measures is followed sequentially by its vii then iv – in four-measure phrases. The dominant is lacking. Up to this point, the music is balanced. The dotted, angular, broken chord outlined on the violins is also repeated sequentially, a whole step lower, providing a brief stolid regularity redolent of Classical instrumental music. Such a retreat into convention is accompanied by jarringly

[101] "L'arte di Giacomo Puccini," 20. The innovation that Leibowitz describes in this instance is that there are two entirely different episodes taking place concurrently which the audience can perceive and understand. In the past, voices might sing *a parte* with different perspectives on the same dramatic situation, whereas here we have two couples having two separate experiences: Rodolfo and Mimì are reconciled (for the time being) while Marcello and Musetta rip each other's hair out, figuratively speaking, and this is conveyed in a discrete musical "number." The quartet in *La bohème* is like thus like two simultaneous duets, unified.

syncopated chordal outbursts, in which the strong beats are the offbeats, to produce latter-day *Sturm und Drang*. The orchestra stays in the aural foreground, the effect being almost one of emotional detachment, as if the singers and orchestra are going through the conventional motions of opera.

Then a sudden switch: Lauretta, Schicchi, and Rinuccio burst into "singing," reinforced by generous *sviolinata*[102] in the orchestra, in a moment of classic Puccini diatonic lyricism in expressive D-flat major. This outburst of *verismo* is short-lived, but the composer has given us a melody that symbolizes Rinuccio's and Lauretta's love, one that is so sweeping and warm as to later become almost too big for its characters, and the first few notes of which become a comically quick calling card for their relationship in the scene that follows. The voices are now in the foreground, the effect being of full-blooded, heightened emotion. Contrasting vocal, instrumental, and historical styles are juxtaposed to create what are in effect different narrative voices: one restrained and internalized, the other passionately expressive. The disjunction between the juxtaposed styles creates a certain irony. We understand what the characters are going through, and what they are saying to each other, but their contrasting anachronistic styles of expression make us question their sincerity, as if they too know they are performing in a show and are complicit with the audience in the whole operatic enterprise.

In summary, a modernist twist on old procedures, including the use of "wrong-note" harmony with functional implications, the employment of ostinati, and the convention of the operatic quartet, combine to suggest that Puccini was engaged in a neo-classicism that was particular to him.

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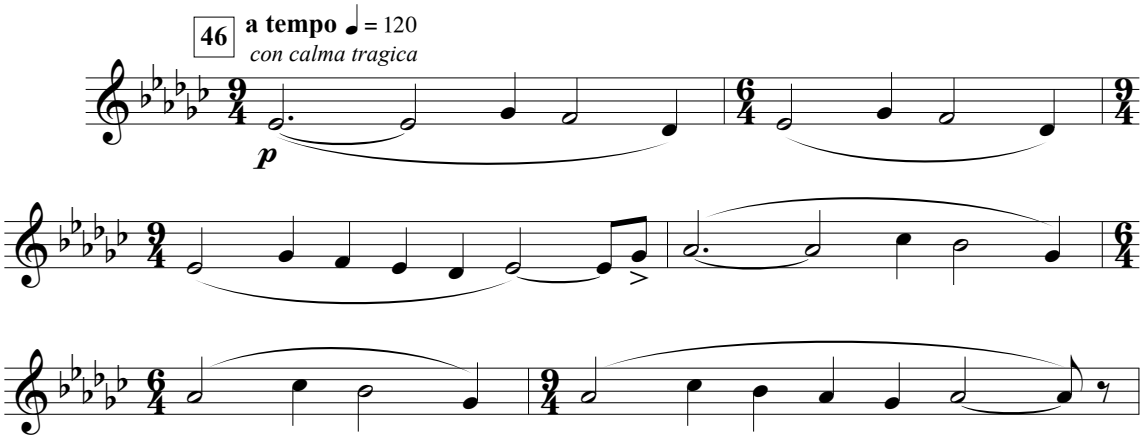
[102] Also *violinata*, this term refers to orchestral doubling of vocal lines at differing octaves, and was a favorite device of *verismo* composers when they wished to intensify a singer's melody.

CHAPTER 4: POSTMODERN PUCCINI

Having set eyes on her for the first time, and fully cognizant that failure means execution, the unknown Prince (who is actually Calaf, son of Timur) is set upon solving three riddles posed to him by Princess Turandot. Act I is brought to a cumulative, climactic end as he affirms his resolve, Timur and Liù beg him to desist, and the crowd eagerly anticipates yet another death. Ignoring them all, Calaf bangs the gong three times, signaling his intent to be challenged.

Concerted musical tableaux are part of the historic procedures of Italian opera – we may think immediately of those that end the third acts of *La traviata*, *Otello*, and *Manon Lescaut*, and we could go back further. In this instance, however, it is not the final section of a typical multi-movement finale (with an obvious starting point). The concertato (beginning at I, [47]) consists basically of one melody (Ex. 27) – the second phrase of which is a mere transposition of the first up a fourth – with a recall of the coda of Calaf's preceding aria.



Example 27, *Turandot*, I, [46]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

Successive layers of vocal or orchestral doubling, and then countermelodies derived from its chord structure, are superimposed on this melody to bring it to a climactic conclusion. It might be called lavish minimalism.

Minimalism in *Turandot*

Timothy A. Johnson defines minimalist technique as "a continuous formal structure, an even rhythmic texture and bright tone, a simple harmonic palette, a lack of extended melodic lines, and repetitive rhythmic pattern."[103] He notes: "many pieces that are obviously not influenced by minimalism contain one of these characteristics in isolation…. However, the appearance of two or more of these features in a piece would suggest that the minimalist technique is a compositional feature of that piece." [104] Johnson also notes that simplicity is the "most prominent characteristic of harmony in the minimalist style."[105] The final chorus of Act I of *Turandot* conforms to these criteria for minimalist music, something we tend to associate with the postmodern era.[106]

Puccini's simple, recurring motif undergoes no structural change. The harmony is clear and simple, essentially i, v, i, iv, i, v, i in E-flat minor. [107] The melody is repeated in its entirety four times and once in a shortened form. That "melody," however, is not much more than a composite of a five-note motive that could barely be considered

[103] Timothy A. Johnson, "Minimalism: Aesthetic, Style, or Technique?" *Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 751.

[104] Ibid., 751.

[105] Ibid., 748.

[106] Whereas in literature, architecture, and the visual arts minimalism is seen as a phenomenon of modernism, in music we associate it with postmodernism. One could argue that musical minimalism really got going when modernism was starting to break down. (This was taking place when, incidentally, Pop Art was destabilizing modernism as a larger cultural enterprise.) Thanks to Byron Stayskal for making this point and for helping me clarify the distinction.

[107] In the genesis of *Turandot*, E minor was the original tonal area. See Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 103–4.

"melodic" (given Puccini's adeptness at writing cantilena when the moment calls for it). The characteristic half–quarter–half–quarter alternation of this melody is repeated at least thirty-two times with insistent regularity. The melody could be barred in various ways: the alternation of 9/4 and 6/4 allows for ambiguity of strong beat/weak beat, complemented by a harmonization of parallel minor triads that avoid a sense of tonal pull. In isolation it is banal, although it can be infuriatingly catchy. In context, however, it becomes a grand, cumulative, and culminating end to the act.[108] To paraphrase Johnson: the prominent teleological activity in the final chorus from Act I of *Turandot* suggests that, despite its reliance on process, it does not exhibit a minimalist aesthetic, although it does exhibit a minimalist *style.*[109] It also employs a minimalist *technique* in a particularly grandiose fashion.[110]

This music, especially in its basic pitch organization, follows Johnson's definition of minimalist technique almost to the letter. But although Puccini may fulfill the definition of "minimalist," the passage sounds nothing like Riley, Reich, or Glass, because it is teleological. The chorus, for example, is driven by tonal orientation as well as repetition, and the repetitions follow a pattern that does not strongly disrupt *entrainment* in a way that the classic minimalist music of the later twentieth century might have done. The repetitions come with a gradual accretion of onstage and instrumental voices, building up to a moment of abruption that is climactic and dramatic, when the Prince breaks the established pattern of the music by striking the gong three times, signaling his intention to be tested by the three riddles. There is classic

[108] This was not the end of the act as it was first drafted by Adami and Simoni. See Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 59–88, for an account of the tortuous process by which the libretto and Puccini's composition came about.

[109] Johnson, "Minimalism," 749.

[110] Ironically, the lavish grandiosity of the writing lies outside the minimalist *aesthetic.*

"Puccinian" doubling of the melody in various registers. Such doubling not only reinforces the repetition: as Andrew Davis says, it "lowers the music stylistically," thereby increasing its "affective immediacy."[111] In other words, it drives the point home directly.

The first full iteration of this melody is played by the flutes, oboes, English horn, clarinets, bass clarinet, horn/alternating trumpet, first violins, and celli, in various octaves. None of the singing voices doubles the melody entirely: only fragments are sung by Ping and Timur. In the second full statement, second violins join the first on the melody, while arpeggiations of the harmonic progressions on which the ensemble is built occur in quarter notes in the celli and bass clarinet, and eighth notes in the harp.

In the third full statement ([47]) the violins take up eighth-note arpeggiation higher up in tessitura while the violas begin to double the quarter-note arpeggiation of the celli – also in a higher tessitura than before. The solo voices are exploited to increase the intensity of repetition: the Prince sings the melody in the upper-middle tenor range; when the melody would go below his range it is passed off to Timur, who sings it in the upper reaches of his (bass) range. Timpani and bass drum entrances become more frequent. Thus intensity is maintained and increased.

By the fourth full statement, the melody is reinforced by the largest number of onstage voices heard thus far, with some unusual instrumental accretions: by two onstage (unseen) piccolos on the tune, and bass xylophone interjections. At this point the first violins and celli play the melody and a counterpoint to it, respectively, in the upper

[111] Andrew Davis, *Il trittico, Turandot and Puccini's Late Style*, 30.

extremes of their ranges. The strategy is obvious, but no less effective in creating a sense of onward progression, even though the basic musical structure is unchanging.

Puccini is calculating in the craftsmanship of the voicing of these counterpoints: in the first three iterations of the melody, counterpoints remain consonant, serving to hammer home the ostinato quality (harmonic, rhythmic) of the germinal motive. By the fourth repetition, however, suspensions in the voice-leading add dissonance and resolution to the intensity of the vocal and instrumental tessituras (and recall once again the exercises in counterpoint that Puccini would have done in Lucca and Milan before his first essays in opera composition).[112]

The point is that this concertato is constructed of the most basic musical elements, repeated. Any kind of "lyrico-symphonic" development is avoided, dramatic intensity being achieved by adding layers of voices, exploiting the extremes of instrumental and vocal tessituras, and the crescendo that these create. Unlike in the work of the later minimalists, late-Romantic sophistication and age-old musical craftsmanship are lavished on the orchestral writing. In this sense, the music is not minimalist.

Growth in this final chorus of Act I is repetitive and textural, not developmental, built on a recurring small motive circling around a central note; we might say it is an accumulative structure based on a repeated melodic "block." But in repetition there is no monotony—something that Puccini always sought to avoid.

A short piece of quasi-minimalist writing also takes place in Act III, after the Prince has reflected that no one will sleep in Peking tonight ("Nessun dorma"). Ping,

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[112] See Nicholas Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions and Puccini: Compositional Theory and Practice in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), chapters 4, 5, and 6 for a comprehensive account of Puccini and his contemporaries' training in harmony, counterpoint, and solfeggio. There was no significant change in musical pedagogy throughout the nineteenth century: Puccini's training was more or less the same as Rossini's.

Pong, and Pang bring on a group of semi-nude, extremely beautiful, alluring young women to tempt him. The three officials go on to offer him riches, and anything he wants. This exchange takes place with a minimalist approach that is obvious from even a cursory glance at the score (III, [9]). (Ex. 28: page 115). The violins play the same unchanging four-note sixteenth-note figure thirty-two times. The oboes, English horn, and clarinets play their unchanging eighth-note pitch seventy-two times. The entire passage consists of four pitch classes: A–D–E–G. This static but motoric music nonetheless has a strong sense of onward progression that is in no way derived from harmonic change, but rather via the following:

1) In their entrance, the violas, initially staggered *divisi*, alternate with each other more rapidly, and they come together as a unanimous section in the final five measures.
2) The celeste breaks its own quarter-note ostinato pattern after four iterations, and the tessitura of the final five is changed to the upper octave only.
3) The flutes and piccolo, which have a similar pattern to the celeste but in half notes, undergo similar change.
4) The prominent trumpet solos, an octave apart, play the pitches D–E–G–A in a repetitive cycle until the final five measures; the initial, strongly double-dotted rhythm gives way to a syncopated version that effectively re-draws the bar-line, creating a "collage" effect of simultaneous but disjointed duple meters an eighth note apart.
5) The antiphonal vocal entrances are staggered in a way that increases a sense of onward motion

6) Finally, the sense of progressive musical development is bolstered by a *crescendo* and *stringendo*.

These features are self-evident from a glance at the score. We may obtain a sense of minimal musical material by listening; but this is counteracted by a built-in sense of development—notwithstanding the repetition of an unchanging pitch class—by changes in the rhythm and frequency of repetitions. Puccini also uses a higher tessitura to make the tension progress: note that the celli and bass are tacet throughout. This musical material is unrelated (in pitch class, rhythm, harmony, and tempo) to what came before it; and although the *subsequent* passage uses some of the same pitches—the "open" nature of the sonorities created by those pitches continues to suggest Chinese-ness—to all other intents and purposes, what succeeds this short passage of only about 14 seconds is entirely new. Puccini seems to have employed a minimalist technique before the term was invented.

2. The Frames of *Turandot*

Given Stoïavana's provocative suggestion that *Turandot* is "among the first work in the tradition of opera that points to the compositional features and aesthetic aspects of postmodernism," this study would be incomplete without a consideration of Puccini's last opera from the standpoint of twentieth-century collage or mosaic technique, which "requires the creation of heterogeneous musical textures."[113] However, there is rarely, if ever, the kind of collage defined by Peter Burkholder, whereby music of different styles or textures is *simultaneously* juxtaposed, as in the three dances played at the same time in

[113] Stoïavana, "Remarques sur l'actualité de 'Turandot,'" 204. Also see my Chapter 1.

the Act I finale of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.[114] Stylistically different music in *Turandot* tends to be juxtaposed *successively*, rather than simultaneously, making Stoïavana's description of successive sonorous "frames" more apt. But aesthetic aspects of collage are common to the successive frames. They have respective stylistic individualities, are perceived as being different from each other and as having separate sources, and differ from each other in tonal center (or none), meter, *tinta*, tempo, or a combination thereof.

According to Losada, collage "subverts the concept of unity by juxtaposing various fragmentary quotations from different musical styles within a single composition."[115] We might ask similar questions about the frames as she does about collage. What are the relationships among them? What are the structural implications of such disparate elements? How do we analyze "music with such diverse musical idioms?"[116] Technical analysis must go hand-in-hand with contextual, referential, and intertextual considerations.

Stoïavana's claim that *Turandot* is a concatenation of "frames," or uni-formal "sonorous panels," each founded on one specific texture, is compelling, and such frames are perceived quickly via aural and score analysis. The more perplexing issue is how the "unfolding" takes place in a way that seems inevitable despite the strong discrepancies among them, like a musical stream of consciousness. Part of the answer may lie in our recognition of musical styles and how contrasting styles relate to or argue with one another. Another answer may lie in the observation that although some, but not all, of the frames are musically unique, others retain strong threads or just fragments of motivic association, making a further layer of juxtaposition or collage possible.

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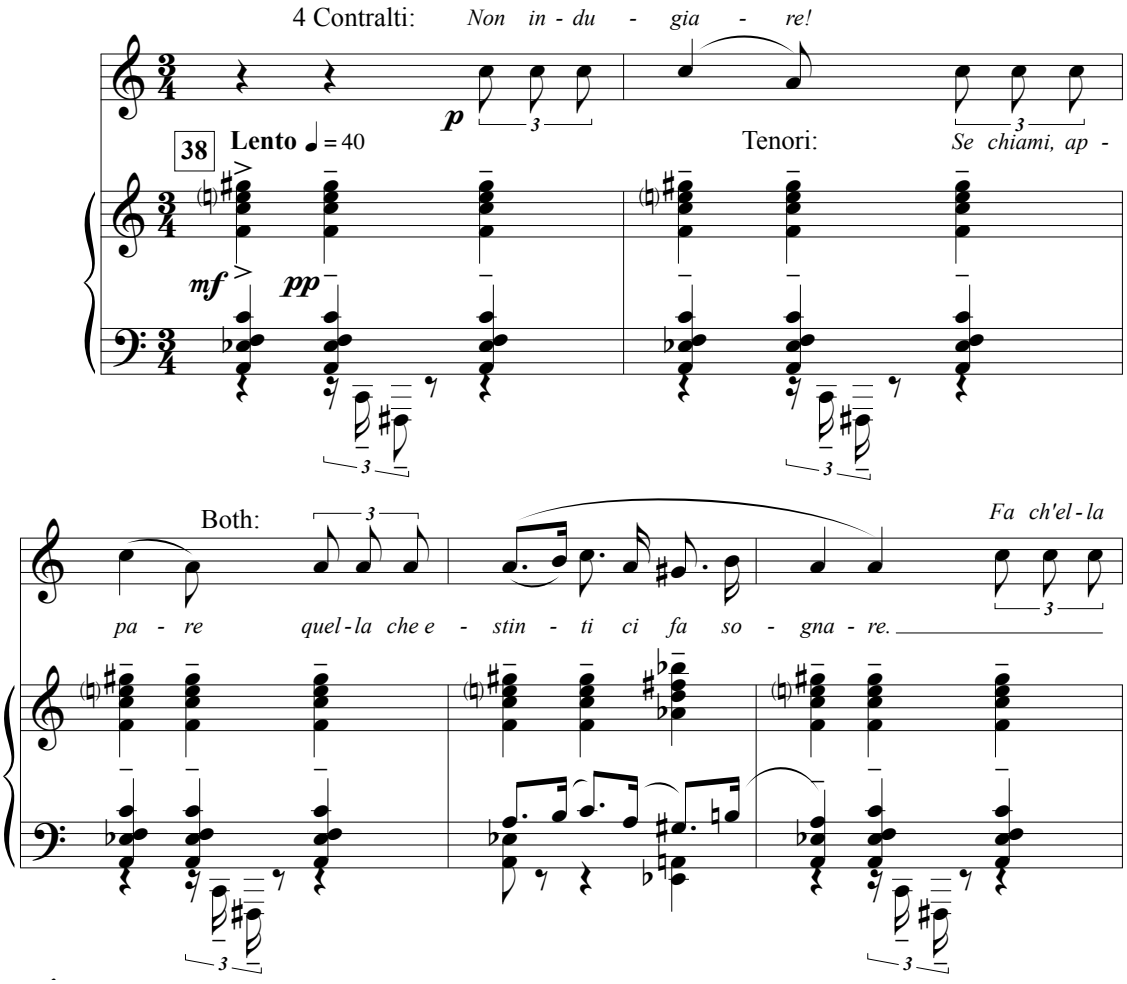
[114] *Grove Music Online,*. s.v., "Collage," by J. Peter Burkholder; accessed 30 June 2015.
[115] Losada, "Between Modernism and Postmodernism," 57.
[116] Loc. cit.

One unique "panel" is the moment of Expressionist orchestral atonality in Act I when the ghosts of Turandot's dead suitors sing how they love her (I, [38], Ex. 28).



Example 29, *Turandot*, I [38]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

This panel is framed on either side by others with the three Masks that, although unrelated to each other musically, retain the textual commonalities of the operatic trio and diverse versions of Puccini's orientally-inflected neo-classical tonality.

The relentless Expressionist atonality of Schoenberg's *Erwartung* leaves the listener in a constant state of disorientation, as if the music is expressing the protagonist's desperate, heightened psychological state of anxiety. However, in this case in *Turandot* atonality is preceded and succeeded by neo-classical harmonies or a texture made

familiar hitherto, or by unambiguously tonal (familiar) language, which clarifies and defines the atonal orchestra frame that accompanies the voices of the dead. But concurrent with this atonal orchestral episode, the voices of the dead are singing a fragmented melody in A minor. So two styles exist within this one, short, panel. This is a true collage of styles: atonality and tonality are simultaneous – and discretely perceptible to the ear.

Another striking stylistic juxtaposition is the totally abrupt change in Act I from the executioners' chorus (linked by the opera's opening execution motive) to the "moonrise" chorus (I, [17]). The voices call upon the moon to rise, over a diaphanous orchestral texture of repose and expectation. Narrative time is suddenly slowed down. Over a long pedal on D and sustained D-major triads, rising whole-tone scales form a component of the orchestral voicing that gently destabilizes tonal orientation. This impressionistic shimmer creates another unique moment in the opera, existing in the here and now, never to return. But it gives way to a more concrete, tonal development, as the expressionless crowd begins to express (somewhat grotesque) individual desire: their desire for the moon to rise is because of their hunger for the execution, a bloodlust. The pedal point rises from D through F, and chromatic modulations facilitate a move towards the E-flat-major fanfare on "Pu-Tin-Pao" and the subsequent new panel. So, *within* the discrete texture of this one panel the style changes.

Act II Scene 2 is a "concatenation" of musically (mostly) unrelated frames with a dynamic range of tempos that unfolds with almost breathtaking continuity, providing a domestic, fast-moving comic foil to the grandiosity, high drama, and ritual of the riddle scene that follows it. The three Masks, although predominantly characterized by a

pentatonically-inflected style of "Chinese" neo-classicism, are the only characters in the opera who quickly change styles, sometimes back and forth within one frame. As is the case with collage compositions, "disparate elements are brought into relationship with each other in a manner that seeks to build upon, rather than vanquish the dissimilarities between them."[117] The stylistic juxtapositions in this scene, shared by the same three characters, warrant musical commentary. I will enumerate them as "frames."

Frame 1. Allegro moderato, 3/4, quarter = 120. "Modernisms" introduce Ping, Pang, Pong. Bass ostinato of broken octaves outlines the tritone; planed triads at the major ninth from the bass provide acerbic bitonality, tempered by a comic "stride" bass; Ping's vocal line outlines bitonality at the tritone; after eight measures a new bass ostinato of B-flat minor/ C minor oscillations provides bitonality with a Bartókian, Lydian vocal melody (final, A); a subtle veering towards tonal orientation (D minor but with Lydian G#) provides transition to:

Frame 2. [1] Allegretto, 2/4, quarter = 112. A diatonic duet in D minor by Pong and Pang to a happy pentatonic melody about preparing a wedding/funeral; melody is repeated exactly, with variations in orchestration and (chromatic passing) harmony; a descending bass line ([3]–9) suggests more functional harmony (but no V: IV and III act as [pre]-dominants for G minor); duet becomes trio with "middle section" in iv (G minor), but tonality is always eschewed in favor of discordant non-scale tones, parallelisms, or harmonizations that suggest bitonality (A-major dyads over G-centered triads); a further transitional passage ([5]+5) based on a varied bass ostinato on G slips down one step ([6]–3) to create a true dominant seventh on F leading to:

[117] Losada, "Between Modernism and Postmodernism," 61.

Frame 3. [6] Allegretto, 3/4, quarter = 112. Roughly half in the so-called "Puccinian norm"— diatonic lyricism as the three Masks count the executions in various years—and half in *chinoiserie* as they bemoan their work; the Executioners' chorus from Act I returns as a reminiscence motif signaling the work of the three Masks as agents of execution. This frame is therefore bi-stylistic.

Frame 4. [9] Andantino mosso, 2/4, eighth = 104. Reverie of nostalgia for their country homes—lakeside location suggested by impressionistic, Debussyan melodic and harmonic parallelisms alternating between centers of A and A flat; cadential moments of diatonic warmth seem to make the longing sincere, more "real," giving way to "Wagnerian" ecstasy at the prospect of their retreats ([10]+11 through [12]). The Masks' "sincerity," however, seems comic, ironic: the ecstasy is at odds with the object of their reverie.

Frame 5. [13] Andante mosso, 3/4, quarter = 96. Short lyrical diatonic trio in B-flat major about how they have seen so many crazy, impassioned suitors come and go; not related to any other music in the opera.

Frame 6, [14] Allegretto, 3/8, eighth = 126. Bipartite with a "Chinese" melody and ostinato in bass. Ping, Pang, and Pong recall previous executions; this melody alternates with two recalls of the Executioners' chorus, in E-flat minor, behind the curtain. The first time, the chorus sings in unison/octaves. The second time, the executioners' chorus has additional layers of vocal, on-stage brass, and orchestral harmonization. Ping, Pang, and Pong's continued recollections are superimposed on the edifice. The spatialization of the performers allows the three solo voices to be audibly

discrete from the considerable power of the combined performing forces. There is a seamless shift into:

Frame 7. [18] Molto moderato, 4/4, quarter = 86. This sudden diatonic unison trio in E-flat major ("Addio, amore!") is of entirely new material, disjointed and musically at odds (except for the key of E-flat major) with everything that has preceded. The rocking E-flat pedal accompaniment is reminiscent of a nineteenth-century, Romantic piano character piece, "softening" the pentatonicism of the vocal melody that is doubled in the Italian lyric style; a subtle collage of Romanticism and "Chinese-ness." It is unlike any other music in the opera. Continuous E-flat pedal continues through:

Frame 8. [19] Molto calmo, 4/4. Short contrapuntal trio ("O tigre!") in E flat with continuous pedal over a broken-chord accompaniment that serves as a B section for the previous trio; softened throughout by a harmonic and melodic flattened seventh (D flat), again suggesting modality. Pang sings the melody of Frame 3—a reminiscence motif. The long E-flat pedal continues into:

Frame 8. [19]+11, A tempo, ma poco più mosso. This is a sudden shift to a dissonant no-man's land. Bi-partite. Pedal tones and harmonic tritones underpin a fragmented pentatonic melody as the trio sing of preparing a notional nuptial bed; the long pedal on E flat finally shifts from E flat to D, however, to create a functional dominant pedal providing a transition to:

Frame 9. [21] Allegro moderato, 2/4, quarter = 80. Conventional, diatonic comic-opera trio with pentatonic and diatonic melodies and variations in orchestral accompaniment of repeated vocal melodic material; unaccompanied final phrase ("alla Cina la pace ridà!") provides strong cadence in G into end of frame ([25]); an offstage

band splices discordantly into this music in an unrelated tonal center (non-triadic A flat) and provides a transition into Scene 2. This final frame of the scene almost seems to fall into the category of "diegetic" music, as the Masks enjoy themselves and, in doing so, seem to entertain the audience with a song. The catchy tune is pentatonic and oft-repeated, with only parenthetical excursions to melodic diatonicism; the harmonization is tonal, but never straightforwardly so (see, for example, the parallel chords after [21] that include planed seconds and fifths, keeping it both "ethnic" and "modern"). The "song-within-the-show" character makes it seem to belong to a short number from a popular operetta.

The most striking aspect of the successive frames is the range of musical styles, the speed with which they unfold, and the degree of un-relatedness they have to each other. Although the three Masks remain mostly indistinguishable from one another, the juxtaposed styles give them character definition at odds with realism. As we have seen, the modernist ostinato and bitonal episodes render them un-empathetic, almost like caricatures; the pentatonicism makes them Chinese; and the Italian lyric style momentarily humanizes them, but how can we take that seriously? Impressionism creates an image for which they are nostalgic; Wagnerism inflates their desire (which is, ironically, for an imagined place, not a person); and a popular style brings us into the realm of entertainment—and in so doing, digresses from the conventional narrative of grand opera and provides a foil for what is to come.

The beginning of Act I is also illustrative of starkly contrasting musical styles. Frame 1. Andante sostenuto, 4/4, half note = 40. The Mandarin proclaims the law that Turandot will marry only the man of royal lineage who can solve the three riddles posed

by her, and that failure to solve them will result in death; the Prince of Persia is to die at moonrise. The concise opening begins with blaring articulation of the "execution" motive in unison brass. The Mandarin is introduced with simple, brutal, and bitonal ostinati based on simultaneous triads of D minor / C# major alternating with B-flat minor / A major. The harmony is non-functional and static, bolstering the ritualistic, depersonalized proclamation of the faceless government functionary. The bold, clear bitonality gives the opening of the opera a stark bluntness.

Frame 2. [3] Allegro, 2/4, quarter = 112. The crowd screams for the executioner. Fast and urgent, initial vocal fragments are based on the "execution" motive, and the vocal declamation is underpinned with bitonal orchestra sonorities. However, a pedal point of low C# (under D-major chords) helps to establish an implied "dominant" before the next panel, which is Romantic-diatonic; there is, however, no dominant triad.

Frame 3. [4] Largo sostenuto, quarter = 58. Longer diatonic section with prominent *sviolinata* theme in which the Prince (Calaf) recognizes his father Timur and meets the servant girl Liù. The emphasis is on the human relationships of these three individuals, contrasting with how the crowd is being subjugated by the palace guards. The initial material in F# minor is repeated twice, first in G minor [5], then in A-flat minor [6]. A mini-panel of chorus outburst, "Ecco i servi del bojo," provides a transition to Panel 4.

In this instance, the de-personalized ostinato of the Mandarin and the brutalist chorus contrast with the (diatonic) human sentiment among Calaf, Timur, and Liù. Tonal lyricism indicates their humanity and evokes our empathy for them; the modernisms that surround them mark out their alienation.

3. A Contextual Consideration of Act II Scene 2

The colorful, kinetic, and grandiose orchestral processionals leading from Ping, Pang, and Pong's extended trio in Act II scene 1 into scene 2, up to the appearance of the Emperor, is a kaleidoscopic locomotive juggernaut unmatched in Puccini's output, redolent perhaps of aspects of Sousa, Gershwin, Musorgsky, Bartók, Shostakovich, Sullivan, and a few others thrown in. Chris Walton has noted that, "In the works of the leading French composers of the 1920s, the influence of Stravinsky, of native *opéra bouffe* and of American popular music merged, often imperceptibly."[118] It was apparently not only French composers who were under such influences. The merger of jazz with neo-classicism is a feature of Stravinsky and, later, Shostakovich.[119] Moreover, Roger Parker has suggested that the "sinister" foxtrot rhythm of Gianni Schicchi's aria ("In testa la cappellina") "would not be out of place in a Brecht–Weill collaboration,"[120] indicating the range of Puccini's post-war cosmopolitanism.

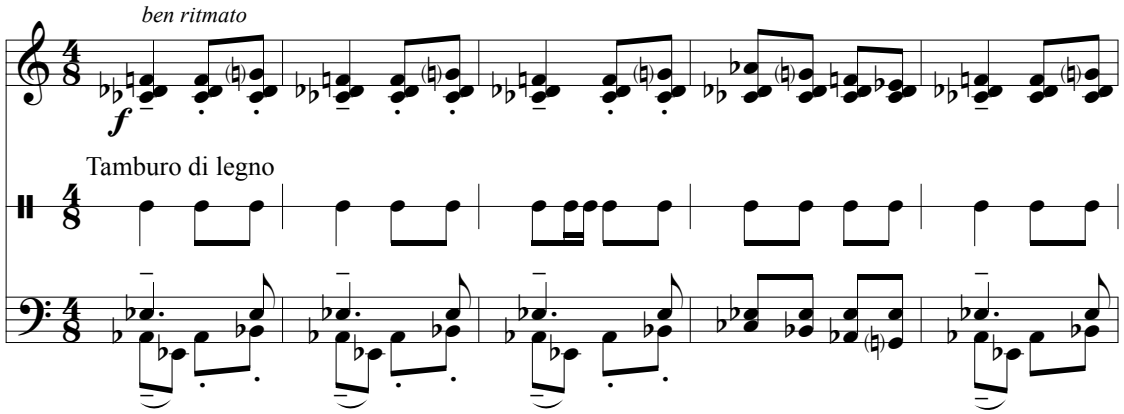
To extend Stoïavana's metaphor, the transition and scene is like a large frame, but consists of a succession of unrelated mini-panels that unfold one after the other with a seemingly logical inevitability that warrants closer consideration. It is arguably the most stylistically heterogeneous frame in the whole opera, taking the audience from the comedic, diatonic–pentatonic world of Ping, Pang, and Pong's preceding, entertaining ditty through the procession leading to the riddle scene. The transition is signaled by the entrance of an offstage band of muted brass and a wooden drum that, in context, has a

[118] Ibid., 112.

[119] Works that spring to mind are Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto* written for Woody Herman, Preludium for Jazz Band, and *Ragtime* for Eleven Instruments. Shostakovich's jazz-inspired works include the *Tahiti Trot* (Tea for Two) Op. 2, the Jazz Suite, and Suite for Variety Orchestra; the Piano Concerto no.1 for piano, trumpet, and strings, Op. 35, also has jazz inflections.

[120] Parker, "'The Purest Word of the Race.'"

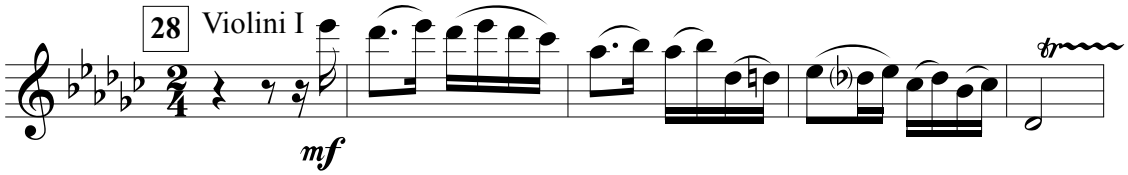
rasping, grating foreignness to it (Ex. 29), although when the same music is taken up by the whole orchestra (at II, [26]) it seems timbrally "normalized" to pave the way for the ensuing spectacle.



Example 30, *Turandot*, II [25]+3, offstage band. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

The initial four-measure phrase is repeated, effectively becoming an ostinato subject that "modulates" back and forth to alternating polytonal "keys." The regular four-part repeated phrases are extended by one measure to effect "modulation" (such as the measure before [26] and the second measure of [27]), creating a break in the pattern to which the listener has quickly become accustomed. The four-measure ostinato phrase and the legato "modulating" measures have a harmonic palette that is, if anything, distinctly French; the parallel sonorities of planed, implied (but unresolved) dominant-seventh-like chords are also the language of jazz. Only instrumental coloration suggests an oriental milieu—the xylophone's periodic, wooden repetition of an incipit fragment (7 before [27]) is a suggestion of Chinese-ness; and the subsequent prominent non-scalic sixteenth-note interjections by xylophone, glockenspiel, and celeste add to the exoticism. But remove them and the music sounds European, un-Italian, and utterly of its time—or, so to speak, even before its time.

Other layers are added: the entrance of the first violins at [28] adds a motoric, melodic flourish that does not relate motivically or otherwise to anything else in the opera; for a moment it increases a sense of tonality centering on D flat (with flat 7) but more than anything it is a kinetic, energizing gesture with a jazz inflection (the passing D natural) that might belong to the upbeat orchestral newsreel music of the 1940s and 50s (Ex. 31).



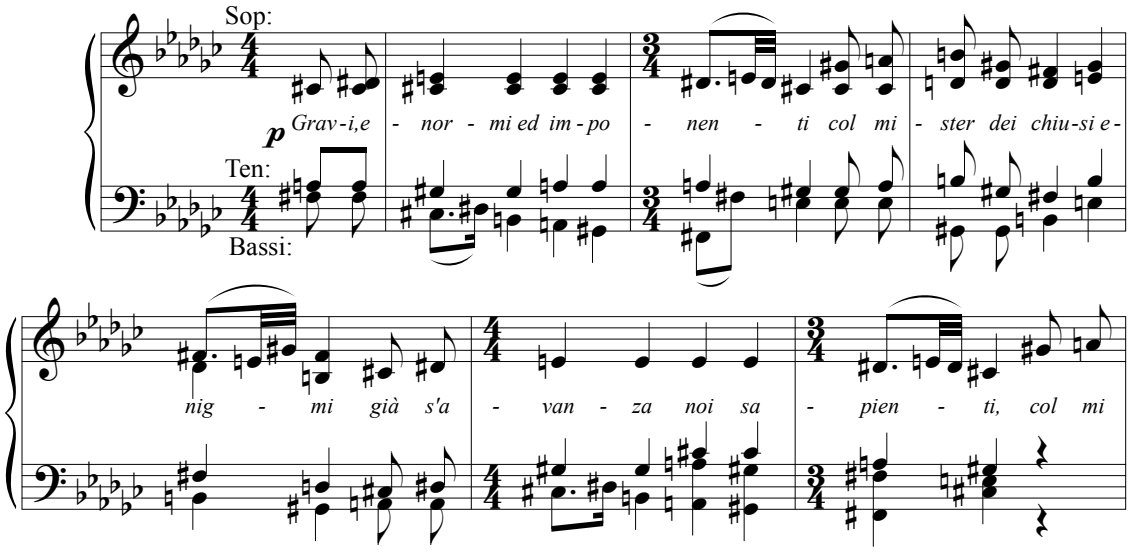
Example 31, Turandot, II [28]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

The violins here are prominent by design: they have the loudest dynamic marking in the orchestra. But they come and go: a passing fragment of color seconded by the simultaneous, pulsating rhythm of the drum and horn. Some musical aspects of the scene up to this point—tempo, texture, and sonorities—are not so far removed from the opening of Gershwin's *An American in Paris* (1928).

This locomotive march gives way to a more populist, popular style of march that is also, nonetheless, not much more than a grand fragment (II, [27]+13). Here we have a collision of progressive and popular music. The initial eight-measure phrase is repeated, suddenly bumped up from G-flat major to A major without a modulation, and given massive orchestral treatment. Again, the contrasting colorations are provided by fragmentary counterpoints of prominent solo voices: first, muted trumpets reprise their grating foreignness; in the repeat, excitement is provided by a high, blaring horn solo (on two instruments) doubled at various other octaves as the rest of the orchestra blasts out

the march tune or its walking bass line. Puccini takes care to make the horns' counterpoint prominent by virtue of its high tessitura. The march is, however, incomplete, dissolving into a reverential hymn (II, [29]+8) as the crowd watches eight wise men process, each one carrying three silken scrolls that contain the answers to Turandot's three riddles.

This hymn belongs to another sound world, the sonorities of which, extracted from the opera and devoid of the Italian text (and instruments), might be from the Russian orthodox liturgy (Ex. 32). The quiet dynamic and low vocal tessitura add gravity to the moment and a dark vocal hue that we associate with Russian choral music. Puccini sought to maintain a non-Western *tinta* at certain points, and it is clear that he could plunder his wide knowledge of non-Italian composers to suggest it.



Example 32, Turandot, II [29]+8. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

The four-part hymn, in SATB configuration, also has the character of a chorus that we might find in *Boris Godunov,* or Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil*. It accompanies an onstage ritual incensing, as, according to the stage directions, smoke rises from the

tripods at the top of the staircase. The meter switches from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to accommodate Puccini's syllabic text-setting. Although tonal, there is no obvious key center, lending it both antique and modern modality. Although the music seems to begin in F# major, it is more oriented towards C# minor, but a switch to a harmonic D natural in the fourth measure negates that and suggests a pull towards B minor. (The ambiguity is aided by parallel fifths in the fourth and fifth measure). The hymn serves two narrative purposes: we understand that the crowd has seen such a ritual many times before; it also serves as a description of the action actually being played out.

A brief return to the opening music of the scene coincides with the reappearance of Ping, Pang, and Pong, who are now dressed in ceremonial yellow robes (II, [30]). But as the "white and yellow standards of the Emperor pass through the clouds of incense" a new, imperial march, itself based on the second phrase of the "Mo-li-hua" melody we first heard in Act I sung by the children, is given a musical treatment that creates a sense of onward development towards a climax, the entrance of the Emperor himself. This development is achieved by repetitions (through II, [32]).

The melody of the first phrase is repeated, exactly, a half-step higher (at II, [31]); the phrase is then broken into three two-measure fragments, each rising in pitch towards the suddenly slower, E-flat major rendition of the imperial hymn. There are no modulations, just sequential repetition upwards. But a D-flat pedal is retained throughout (until it gives way for a final cadence in A flat), creating an increasing sense of tension, as if the orchestra is stretching itself upwards against an opposing force of gravity.

This musical structure is played out with locomotive, then grandiloquent if not bombastic, orchestral brilliance. The hymn is announced by four horns in unison, doubled

by English horn and bass clarinet. Girded by insistent accompanimental eighth-note broken chords in the celli, bass, bassoons, and snare drums, the brilliance is provided by exuberant off-beat chordal chirps on flute, oboe, clarinets, glockenspiel, and celeste. The "finish" is provided by sweeping glissandi on those instruments, harp, and most prominent of all, xylophone, creating an aural analogue to the glistening spectacle on stage that one might describe as an early twentieth-century guide to the orchestra.

The Emperor's appearance is preceded by a fragment of another march ([32]) in a populist style. The grand choral "acclamation" of the Emperor himself, although also little more than a fragment, has the musical trappings of a great patriotic hymn of state, one that is non-Western. The inspiration for this, again, might loosely be considered Russian, as in the paeans to the Tsar we find in *Boris Godunov*, although the crashing tam-tam and a brief pentatonic unison–octave melody in the orchestra after "Diecimila anni al nostro Imperatore" specify, in Puccini's terms, Chinese-ness rather than a more generic eastern Otherness. The high vocal tessitura in parallel thirds gives this passage brilliance and audibility over the huge orchestra playing with *tutta forza.*

Puccini was derided by his nationalistic contemporaries for his cosmopolitanism, a lack of Italian-ness. Here is that cosmopolitan quality in full throttle. The self-consciously modern, jazzy French sonorities, the discordant ostinato with ubiquitous harmonic tritones, the populist elements of tuneful marches and stirring anthem are all indeed cosmopolitan topoi. With hindsight, this scene in musical "Technicolor" of alternately progressive and populist music points the way forward, as do so many other moments in *Turandot*, to how the orchestra would be used in Hollywood and elsewhere in film music throughout the remainder of the century. The marches themselves, perhaps

stripped of their pentatonic inflections, could be by John Philip Sousa, Shostakovich, or John Williams. My references are pointed: they are particular to different periods and different places, yet seem at the same time to be a twentieth-century universal. This familiarity is a testament to the extent to which operatic musical topics and techniques, and Puccini's brilliant use of the orchestra, were borrowed wholesale by popular culture through the film score.

CONCLUSIONS

Virgilio Bernardoni has observed an "ideological divide" between those Italian composers born around 1860 (Cilea, Giordano, Leoncavallo, Mascagni, and Puccini) and those who were born around 1880 and "came to prominence around 1910" (Casella, Malipiero, and Pizzetti).[121] The younger composers came of age at the same time as modernism, were trenchantly critical of the tradition of Italian opera, and sought to break away from it radically. My examination of some aspects of Puccini's late works in this document suggests he was an early modernist, especially compared with others of the 1860s generation who did, indeed, remain "loyal to the melodramatic tradition."[122]

Any assessment of Puccini now needs to consider the problems of his ideologically-driven reception history. Unlike Stravinsky then and now, Puccini did not enjoy a reputation as a modernist. As Walton asserts, Stravinsky could use his modernist credentials to "impart aesthetic validity to matters regarded by many as contrary to the modern—not just a return to tonality, but also to a number-format opera and to a heterogeneity of musical material that might now include everything down to the latest popular fashions, be those American jazz or local popular music."[123] Not only do *Gianni Schicchi* and *Turandot* include "wrong-note" tonality and nods to popular styles and dance as well as jazz sonorities; a myriad other musical topics and styles make for a heterogeneity that marks Puccini out as an eclectic neo-classicist, a modernist—or even a postmodernist.

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[121] Bernardoni, "Puccini and the Dissolution of the Italian Tradition," 26.
[122] Ibid., 26.
[123] Walton, "Neo-classical Opera," 113.

Numerous claims have been made that *Gianni Schicchi* is Puccini's masterpiece, but until recently relatively few scholars have explored how and why it might be so. Generally speaking, I have shown that in this work, besides creating some "organic" unity derived from motivic repetition, development, and transformation, Puccini had an approach to rhythm and meter that was highly modern and sophisticated; and although it is Stravinskyan in manner, even technique, we never have a sense the music could have been written by anyone other than Puccini. Not surprisingly, the technical innovations are entirely conceived from a dramatic standpoint.

Music based on repetition of relatively small fragments, such as the proto-minimalist end of Act I of *Turandot* and the ostinato-based Executioners' chorus in Act I, recalls both the rhythmic style of Stravinsky and the populist style of, say, Carl Orff in *Carmina Burana.* That the opera also makes reference to and uses the Italian lyric style of the late nineteenth century—the "Puccinian norm," as it has been perhaps inaccurately dubbed—does not negate its modernist credentials. In both operas the composer created a synthesis of late nineteenth-century-style associative motives—an established technique of musical narrative—and disjunctive musical modernism.

Based on some of the structural aspects of repetition, fragmentation, ostinato, atonality, bitonality, and polytonality I have discussed in his two last operas, and on their heterogeneity of musical styles, including even such reductive ones as an early kind of minimalism, it does not seem adequate to characterize early twentieth-century composers as "conservative" simply because they sometimes used tonality. There are other considerations.

Turandot is rewarding to analyze, as it continues to perplex us in its polystylism. As I have discussed, scholars have proposed competing rationalizations of its musical structure, from "number opera"— a genuine descendant of the great Italian nineteenth-century lyric tradition—to collage or mosaic, even as a precursor to works such as Berio's *Sinfonia*, a totem of musical postmodernism. I have been able to identify reductive, minimalist tendencies of various kinds, as well as contrasting manifestations of neo-classicism in both operas. The stylistic juxtaposition also creates disjunctive shifts in narrative voice, such as that between the "realism" of the Act II choruses and the puppet-like figures of Ping, Pang, and Pong. The three Masks also change character rapidly through stylistic change: one moment they are anonymous caricatures, the next desirous, the next heartless, the next entertainers who have stepped in front of the proverbial curtain to sing the audience a song.

Although Puccini was seemingly determined to write up-to-date music, his modernisms do not sound gratuitous. They are intrinsic to the drama, not some kind of "absolute" abstraction. In *Gianni Schicchi* the modernisms allow for sometimes discombobulating effects, and seem to reflect an ironic stance and an exaggeration of character that, although grotesque, is never repellant and always compelling. Innovative aspects of rhythm, meter, and tempo in *Gianni Schicchi* point to an acute cognitive awareness on Puccini's part of how audiences—and performers—perceive musical patterns and how they can be manipulated by their distortion or disruption.

Distortions and parodies of operatic conventions and styles are a feature of both operas. The musical references to historic and modern styles, and the way they interact

with each other, reflect Puccini's wide knowledge of music of the past and present, and allow him to satirize opera itself, particularly in *Gianni Schicchi.*

Puccini essays a new way of structuring opera in *Turandot* in response to modernist influences. The work refers to, negotiates with, and comingles with the genre's past and its then-living present. That he died before completing it leaves us with intriguing questions about how he would have finished the work, and bearing in mind he was a persistent reviser, how he would have changed it once he had experienced it in performance.

This document has revealed that Puccini's modernism has considerable complexity that raises questions about the very definition of the term. My view is that once we go beyond Stravinsky and Schoenberg as opposing paradigms for musical "progress," we might reach a broader concept of what modernism in music is, or was. (This comment is by no means intended to reduce the stature or achievements of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, only to remind us that the breakdown of tonality was a rapid and widespread phenomenon.)

Given what I have demonstrated to be modernist tendencies in his last two operas, we might start to question the concept of the "Puccinian norm," since it underestimates the extent to which the composer sought to create discrete but increasingly heterogeneous musical languages for each of his mature works. The "norm" in question might as well refer to the Italian Romantic lyricism of the 1860s generation rather than Puccini specifically. It misleadingly suggests he was a conservative, when that label might more accurately apply to those Italian contemporaries. When scholars refer to his "norm," they generally mean his "early" style. In contrast, Puccini's twentieth-century works after

Tosca are increasingly experimental, allowing even for the anomalous work that began as an operetta for Vienna, *La rondine*.[124]

Taken together, Puccini's last two operas leave us wondering whether if he had lived he would have become a twentieth-century Rossini, wealthy and able to live off his past glories, or continued on a path that was progressive and experimental. Comparing Puccini with his contemporaries, and considering his open-mindedness to his younger colleagues, I suggest he might well have rejected retirement for continued experimentation.

Analysis of Puccini's late oeuvre is continually surprising. When we look for coherence, we find disparateness that nonetheless functions as narrative; when we look for stylistic markers, we find many interacting with each other. Instead of one Puccini, we find several.

The standard historiography of opera suggests that Puccini's works represent the conclusion of four golden centuries of Italian opera. The case for this seems strong, given that no Italian opera since *Turandot* has entered the mainstream repertory, and some aspects of opera's social role were, in many ways, supplanted by cinema and other forms of twentieth-century entertainment. But opera did not go away.

In his last works Puccini took a modernist path. *Gianni Schicchi* and *Turandot* are far from being conservative, backward-looking works at the end of an exhausted tradition. Instead, through their musical style and structure, both operas point clearly and energetically towards future developments of both modernism and postmodernism in later twentieth-century music.

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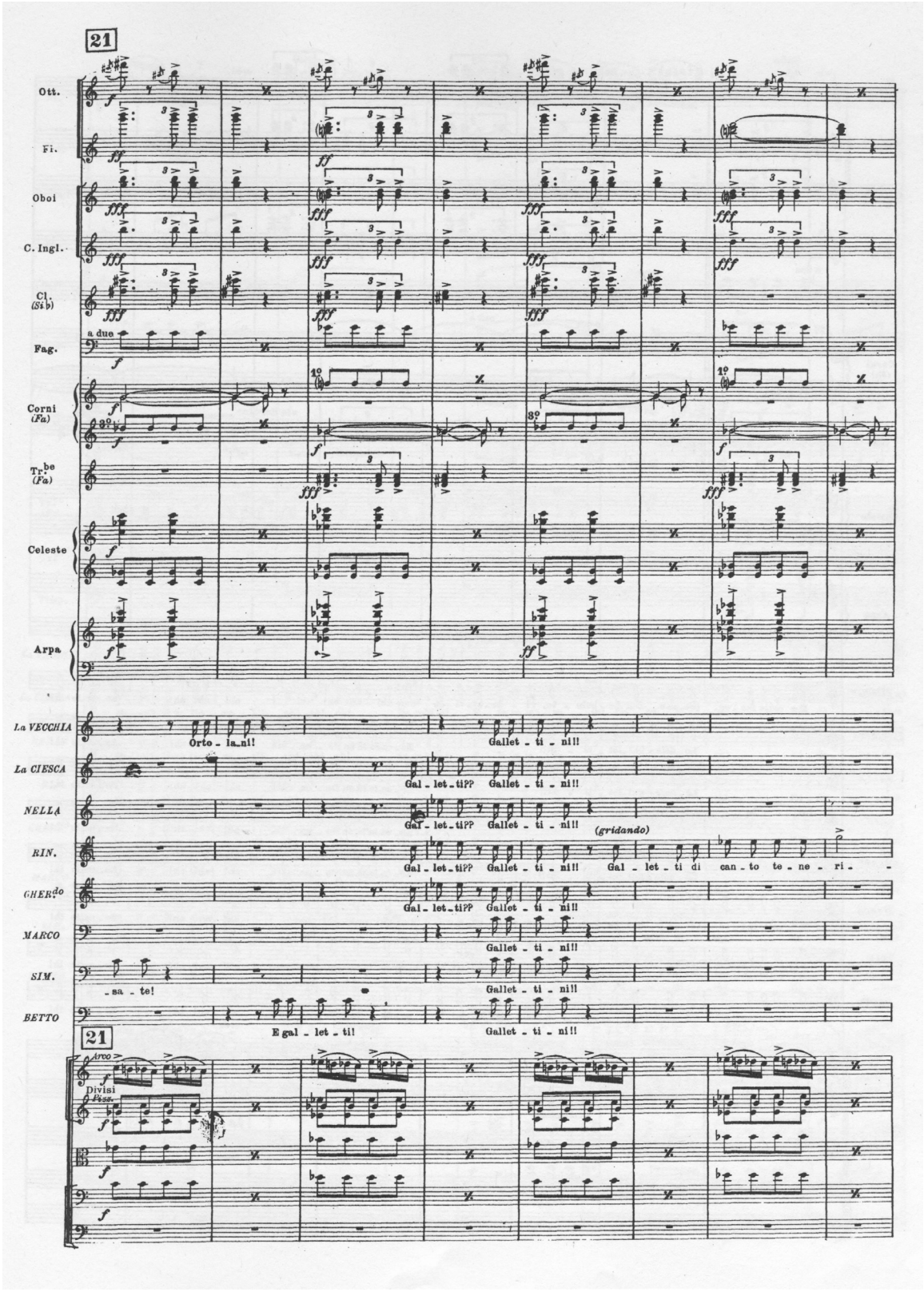
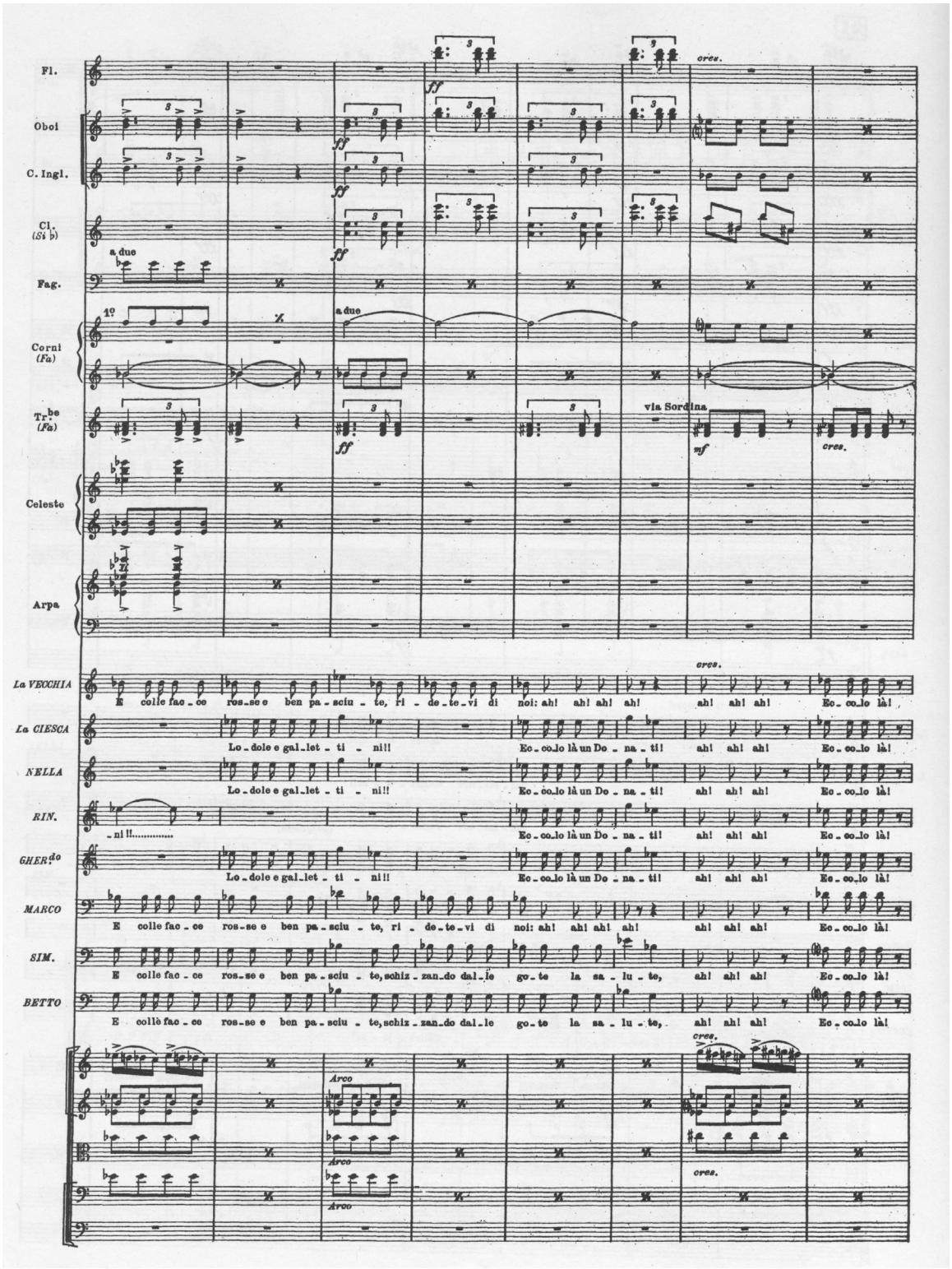
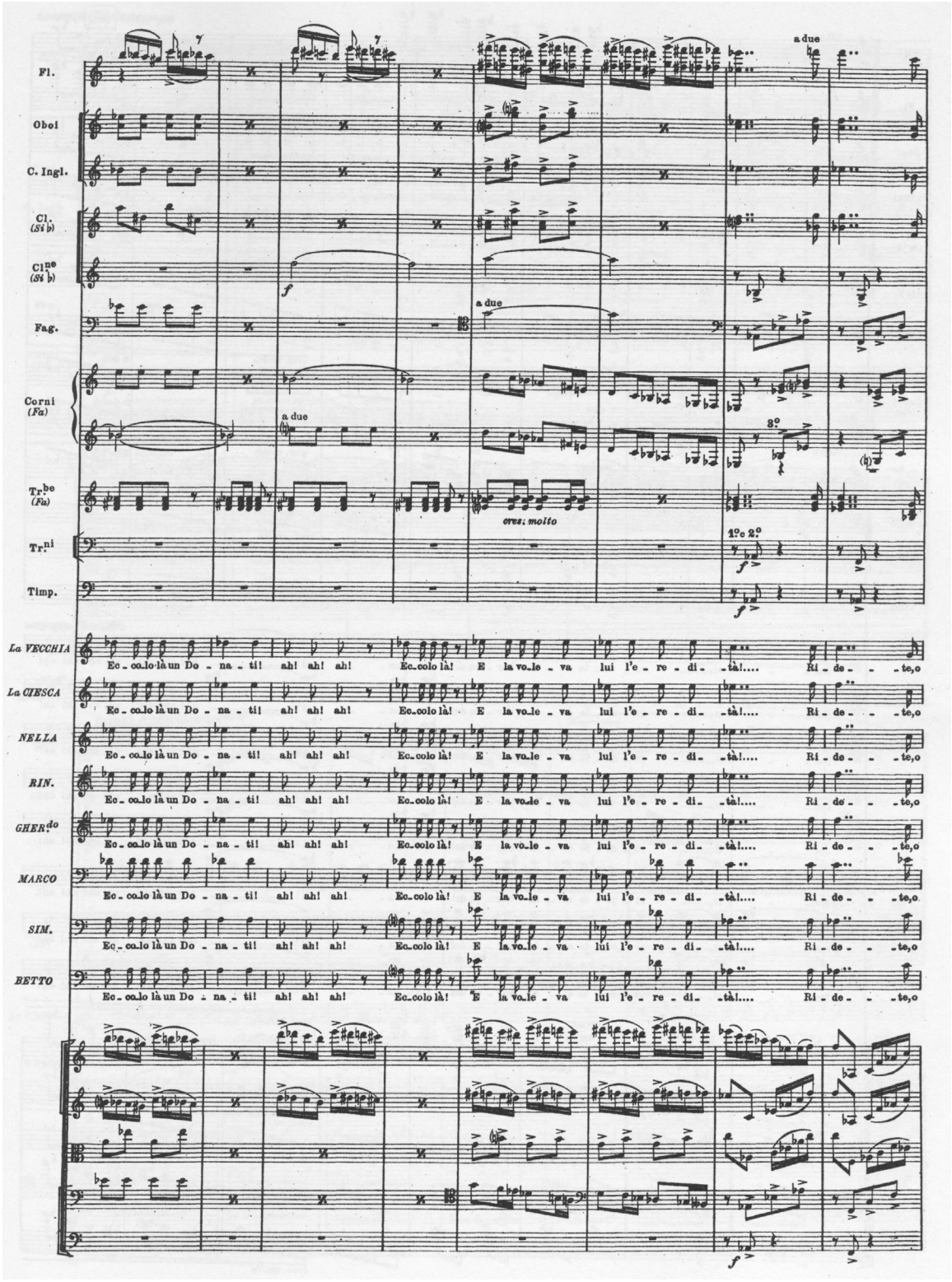
[124] *La rondine* had to be premiered in Monte Carlo because of World War I hostilities between Italy and Austria–Hungary.

APPENDIX 1

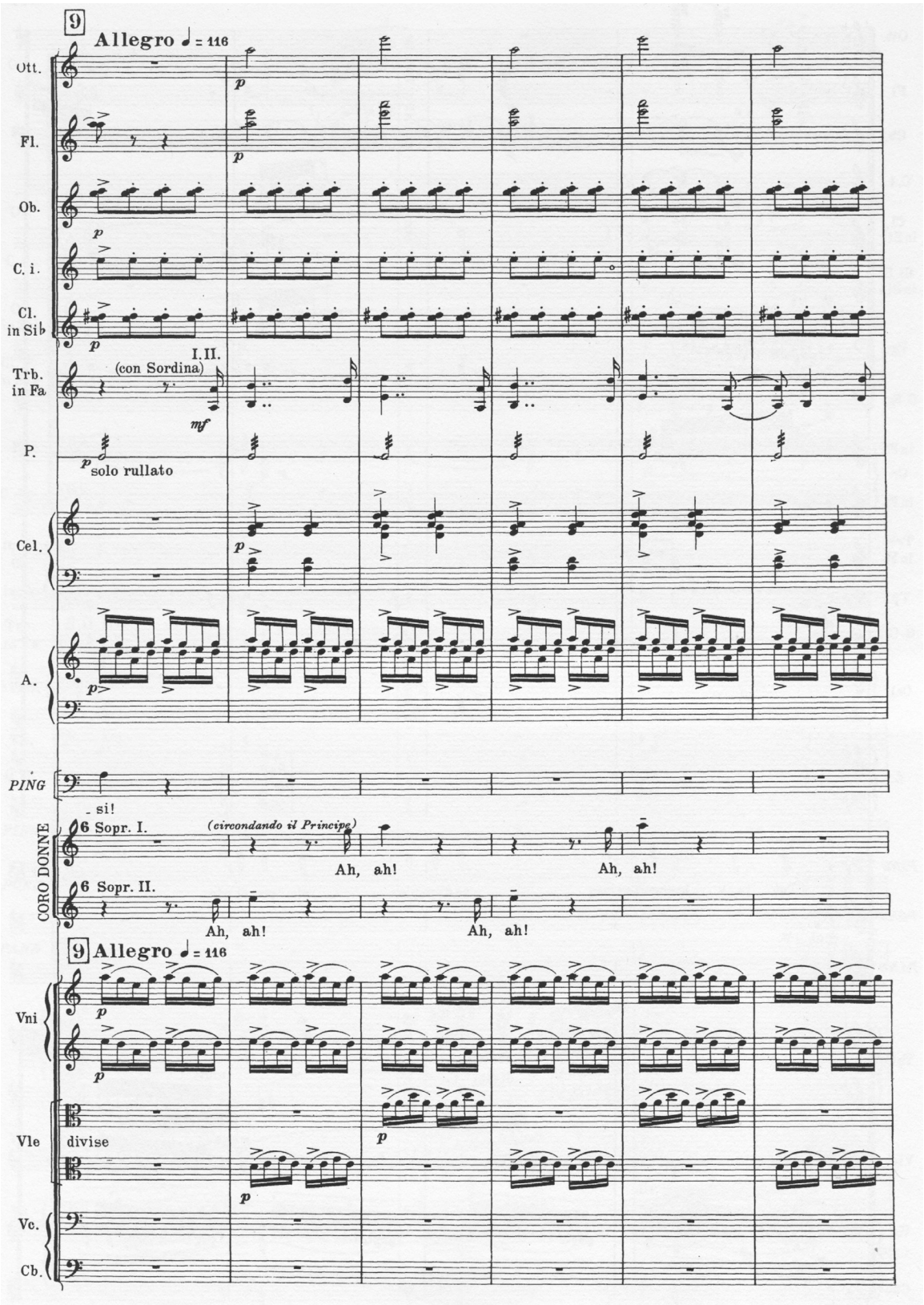


Example 23, *Gianni Schicchi*, [21]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.

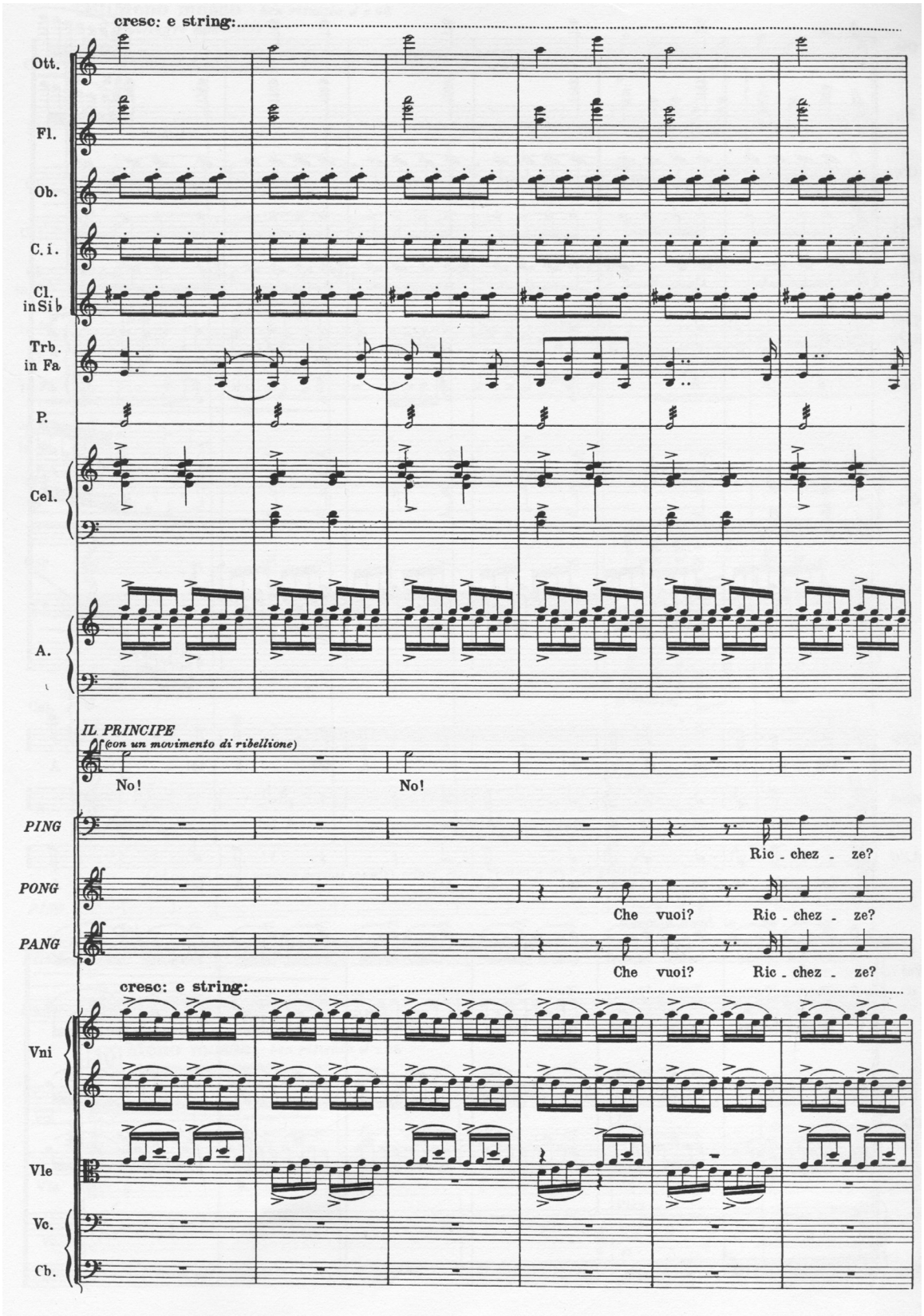

Fl.
Oboi
C. Ingl.
Cl. (Si b)
Fag.
Corni (Fa)
Tr.be (Fa)
Celeste
Arpa
La VECCHIA
La CIESCA
NELLA
RIN.
GHERdo
MARCO
SIM.
BETTO
a due
1º
via Sordina
cres.
ff
mf
E colle fac-ce ros-se e ben pa-sciu-te, ri-de-te-vi di noi: ah! ah! ah! ah!
Lo-dole e gal-let-ti-ni!!
Ec-co-lo là un Do-na-ti!
ah! ah! ah!
Ec-co-lo là!
E colle fac-ce ros-se e ben pa-sciu-te, schiz-zan-do dal-le go-te la sa-lu-te,
E collè fac-ce ros-se e ben pa-sciu-te, schiz-zan-do dal-le go-te la sa-lu-te,
Arco

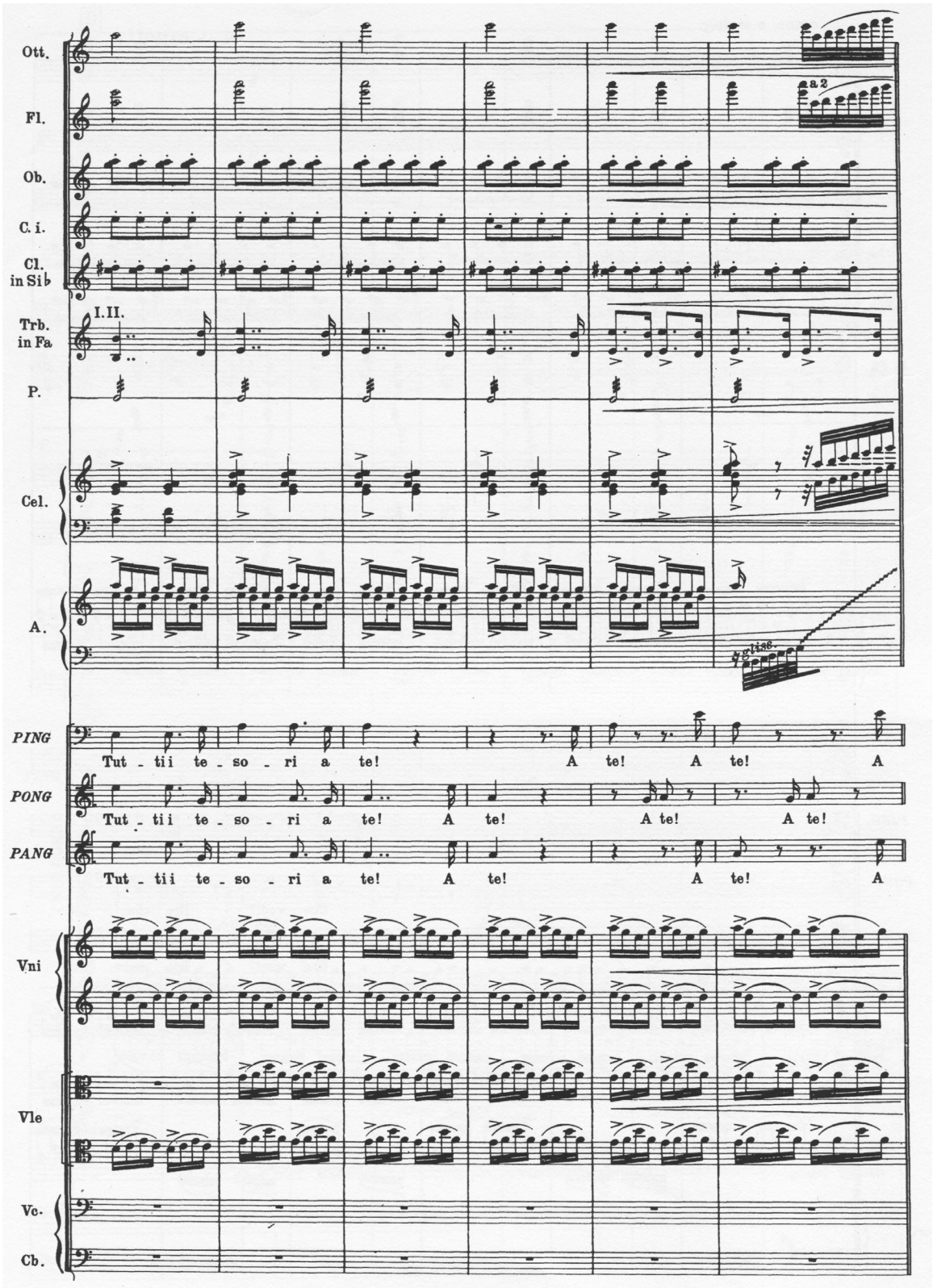

Fl.
Oboi
C. Ingl.
Cl. (Si b)
Cl^ne (Si b)
Fag.
Corni (Fa)
Tr.^be (Fa)
Tr.^ni
Timp.
a due
8°
ores: molto
1° e 2°
La VECCHIA
La CIESCA
NELLA
RIN.
GHER.^do
MARCO
SIM.
BETTO
Ec - co-lo là un Do - na - ti! ah! ah! ah! Ec-colo là! E la vo-le - va lui l'e - re - di - tà!.... Ri - de - - - te,o

APPENDIX 2



Example 28, *Turandot* III, [9]. © Casa Ricordi, Milan – by kind permission.


cresc: e string:
Ott.
Fl.
Ob.
C. i.
Cl. in Si♭
Trb. in Fa
P.
Cel.
A.
IL PRINCIPE
(con un movimento di ribellione)
No!
No!
PING
Ric - chez - ze?
PONG
Che vuoi?
Ric - chez - ze?
PANG
Che vuoi?
Ric - chez - ze?
cresc: e string:
Vni
Vle
Vc.
Cb.


Ott.
Fl.
a 2
Ob.
C. i.
Cl. in Sib
Trb. in Fa
I. II.
P.
Cel.
A.
PING
Tut - tii te - so - ri a te! A te! A te! A
PONG
Tut - tii te - so - ri a te! A te! A te! A te!
PANG
Tut - tii te - so - ri a te! A te! A te! A
Vni
Vle
Vc.
Cb.

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